

**Assembling Understandings:  
Findings from the Canadian Social Economy  
Research Partnerships, 2005-2011**



**Assembling Understandings: Findings from  
the Canadian Social Economy Research  
Partnerships, 2005-2011**

**Matthew Thompson and Joy Emmanuel**



**University  
of Victoria**

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## Author Biography

**Matthew Thompson** has been working with the Canadian CED Network in a wide variety of capacities for the last 4 years. He has been the lead coordinator for the national CED internship program, CreateAction, for the last two years, helped organize the 2010 National Forum on a People-Centred Economy, and has been engaged in various knowledge mobilization activities through the Canadian Social Economy Hub. Matthew is also passionate about local food systems having been an intern with CRAFT Ontario and participating in WWOOF-related programs overseas. Prior to working with the Canadian CED Network he worked with a variety of different non-profit organizations such as L'Arche where he assisted people with developmental disabilities in daily living situations and ACORN where he engaged in community organizing in low-medium income neighbourhoods.

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# Introduction

## What is the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships?

The Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP) was born out of the 2004 federal budget announcement supporting the development of Canada's social economy. Through multi-year funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, six research centres were developed across the country to build collaboration between social economy researchers and practitioners within the innovative context of Community University Research Alliances (CURAs). These social economy CURAs involved 79 universities and over 140 community organizations in identifying research priorities, co-managing resources and direction, conducting the actual research, co-producing the research outputs, and promoting the knowledge that came out of the various projects. The research spanned 17 different university department areas, illustrating how multi-disciplinary the social economy is within Canada.

To help provide a national framework for the remarkable body of work coming out of the six research centres, the Canadian Social Economy Hub (itself a CURA) was established with the BC Institute for Co-operative Studies (at the University of Victoria) and the Canadian Community Economic Development Network co-directing its work. The Hub engaged in research areas that were not part of the oeuvre of the six regional centres and took on a substantial role in the mobilization of knowledge through telelearning sessions, the development of a web-based table of CSERP research projects, the circulation of regular e-bulletins, and assisting in the establishment of a Social Economy Student Network. Public policy development and government dialogue was a particular priority for the Hub, working to develop opportunities for the research to translate into political action for continued support of social economy development.

## A Thematic Summary of the CSERP Projects

Close to 400 products were generated through the various CSERP research projects in the six regional centres and the national hub. These outputs take many different forms including final research reports, student theses, published journal articles, articles published in the popular press, conference and slideshow presentations, fact sheets, and poster presentations. The content of these outputs

is even more varied than the form they take, ranging in theme and scope and developed using a wide array of research methods including surveys, case studies, literature reviews, personal interviews, and statistical analyses. This body of research is a substantial contribution to understanding the history, the current context, and the future of the social economy in Canada. Continuing studies in co-operation, social enterprise, and community economic development will be able to build upon the work accomplished by CSERP and community practitioners will benefit from the expanded evidence base for their work. These projects also provide excellent examples of participatory action research and community university partnerships—solidifying the social economy as an area of important academic study, building research capacity amongst practitioners themselves, and moving this work out into the community where it may find wider application to support community development and building a people-centered economy.

With *Assembling Understandings*, the Canadian Social Economy Hub has developed a thematic summary of the CSERP outputs, exploring some of the dominant crosscutting themes within the research findings. This approach is very similar to a grounded theory approach wherein the authors, while reviewing the various available documents, ‘listened’ to the data for emerging themes. Care was taken to engage with the work from multiple angles, taking note of both diversity and unity within the body of research. The challenge in this form of research was for the authors to construct each chapter based on what was covered in the research as opposed to the expanse of what can be covered under each theme. In this way, the overall picture provided here is not a complete analysis of Canada’s social economy landscape, but rather provides an overview of the CSERP research findings in the following thematic areas: Mapping, Social Enterprise, Co-operatives, Indigenous Peoples, Organizational Governance & Capacity, Social Finance, and Public Policy. Each thematic area had representation in over 50 CSERP projects, with some chapters involving as many as 85 relevant research products. As a result, *Assembling Understandings* is a useful reference point for both reviewing the available CSERP documents and identifying where further research may be required.

This thematic analysis, it must be noted however, is not a complete summary. Although the authors took great effort to engage in a cycle to read – digest – write – sort – regroup – read – write – review, given the incredible depth, range, and size of the CSERP research projects, time constraints did not permit an analysis of all themes and new thematic threads continue to emerge. Additionally, the authors did not have access to all research products and sometimes had to make do



with draft reports, project descriptions, brief presentation notes and slideshows, and original project proposals. Nevertheless, what emerges with *Assembling Understandings* is a detailed snapshot of the remarkably robust and innovative nature of Canada's social economy, and demonstrates where key developments can potentially have a significant influence on the continued growth and social impact of the sector.

Matthew Thompson

## Websites of the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships

Most of the sources referenced in this book are available from the websites of the regional research centres or the national hub. A full list of publications is available from the national hub website.

Canadian Social Economy Hub

<http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca>

Québec Node: The Alliance de recherche universités-communautés en économie sociale (ARUC-ÉS) and the Réseau québécois de recherche partenariale en économie sociale (RQRP-ÉS)

<http://www.aruc-es.uqam.ca/>

Northern Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan Node: Linking, Learning, Leveraging: Social Enterprises, Knowledgeable Economies and Sustainable Communities

<http://usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy/>

Southern Ontario Node: Social Economy Center

<http://socialeconomycentre.ca/>

Northern Node: Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada (SERNNNoCa)

<http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/sernnoca/>

Atlantic Node: The Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network

<http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic/>

BC and Alberta Node: British Columbia – Alberta Research Alliance on the Social Economy (BALTA)

<http://www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca/>

Frequently Used Abbreviations

BALTA.....	BC – Alberta Research Alliance for the Social Economy (regional research node)
CCEDNet.....	Canadian Community Economic Development Network
CED.....	Community Economic Development
CSEHub.....	Canadian Social Economy Hub (the national hub of CSERP)
CSERP.....	Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships, the six regional research nodes and national hub that were part of the national social economy research program
CU.....	Credit Union
ESO.....	Environmental Service Organization
NOMS.....	Northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan (regional research node)
SEO.....	Social Economy Organization
SPB.....	Social Purpose Businesses



# CHAPTER 1

## Mapping the Social Economy: How Do We Know Thee? Let Us Count the Ways

Joy Emmanuel

### Introduction

In the course of six years (2006-2011), the six research nodes and the Hub of the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnership produced over 350 reports on various aspects of the social economy in Canada – from sea to sea to sea. Close to 80 of these final reports were clustered under the theme of “mapping.” Mapping, portraiture, census, survey, overview, inventory – these are all words used in the research reviewed in this chapter to describe the process and outcomes of “mapping” the social economy. These studies provide a useful overview of the composition and characteristics of the social economy at a local or regional level and collectively they provide a new, more detailed layer for understanding the national portrait of the Canadian social economy.

Within these reports, “mapping” the social economy, or “portraiture,” took on a variety of meanings. In a broad sense this research was intended to survey some aspect of the social economy thus, they are mostly descriptive studies intended to capture a picture of: What social economy organizations (co-ops, NP, volunteer agencies, social enterprises) exist in our communities? What resources are available to them? What are the benefits, issues, challenges, trends, opportunities, policies, assets, resources connected to their operations? What factors influence their success? How are certain populations engaged and impacted? These are just a few of the many questions researchers probed in their efforts to begin mapping the social economy of Canada.

Mostly these studies are exploratory in nature; reflecting that this is an emerging field of inquiry. For researchers who focused on mapping the “big picture,” one of the first challenges was how to locate social economy organizations or representatives when there is no existing list and given that many organizations that are part of the social economy may not even self-identify with this way of

naming themselves. Then too, there is the matter of different ways of defining the social economy, which in turn shapes the terrain for what will be studied and what criteria will be used to locate participants. As a result of the diversity of definitions the terms “social economy,” “social economy organizations” and “social enterprises” are sometimes used to “measure” and “map” the same phenomena and at other points they measure slightly different – yet similar – social structures.

### Overview

In this chapter, we explore the diversity of approaches to mapping the social economy beginning with the most common approach – developing a list of all social economy organizations in a designated area and identifying a range of characteristics of those organizations – thus creating a portrait of the state of the social economy in that domain. From the macro view, we move to the local level where it can be helpful to know who is in our community and, what are the possibilities for building strong partnerships around shared concerns and opportunities? We briefly touch on some of the common findings around social and economic impacts as well as shared challenges named in these studies. The second section of this paper examines a variety of innovative ways that researchers approached “mapping” the social economy: by doing inventories of financial and other infrastructure supports in the region; by looking at how social economy players are addressing specific issues; by examining how marginalized populations are impacted and/or participating in the social economy; or by examining current and future best practices around social accounting, social capital, capacity building, and even policy recommendation. We round out the chapter with a section reviewing the methods employed in mapping the social economy.

As on any mapping expedition, it can be helpful to take lots of pictures along the way. This chapter provides numerous snapshots of the united mapping efforts to portray the state of the Canadian social economy.

### Defining the Social Economy

The first step is defining the social economy – a critical step for a broad and highly debated concept. Given the definitional debates, no one approach exists for measuring – and thus mapping – the social economy; however, given that the social economy is well established in Québec and is viewed there as an intricate aspect of regional development, it is not surprising that research from the Québec node strongly influenced the standard for defining and measuring the social economy in

other parts of Canada. The one source most often cited as a way to define the social economy was Bouchard, Ferraton, and Michaud (2006).

### **Qualifying Criteria of Social Economy Organizations**

The first criterion is that the organization must carry on economic activity. The second criterion is the existence of social rules prohibiting or limiting distribution of surpluses among members. The third criterion is to have a formal voluntary association of persons and/or of collective bodies. Democratic governance is the fourth criterion. (Bouchard et al. 2006)

Two years later, in 2008, a new standard for measuring the social economy was set through the *Statistical Portrait of the Social Economy of the Region of Montreal* (*Portrait statistique de l'économie sociale de la région de Montréal*) under the direction of Marie Bouchard, Canadian Research Chair on the social economy at the Université du Québec à Montréal in partnership with the Conseil régional des élus of Montreal and its Committee of the Social Economy of the Island of Montréal. While the 2006 report set a precedent for defining the social economy, their further work in this area resulted in setting a new benchmark for scientific analysis of the social economy (2008).

Prior to this there was no accepted standard for measuring the social economy in a way that allowed for rigorous statistical analysis in determining a representative sample from which probability generalizations could be made. The authors embraced all the previous challenges around how to measure the social economy; such as, different definitions of the social economy (from solidarity economy, social enterprises, third sector); the diversity of legal structures (such as for-profit and not-for profit organizations); different methodologies and indicators for studying the social economy which are still evolving; and the range of diverse activities making it hard to classify social economy actors.

In light of this debate, rather than offer a new definition of the social economy, the researchers adopted a two-phased approach – first identify organizations by social economy principles and second classify by activity. “Qualifying organizations” were identified based on “empirically observable” indicators for each of the generally agreed upon four principles of the social economy (see Bouchard, “Qualifying Criteria” insert above). This allowed the researchers to determine which organizations would be included in the social economy census in the

Montreal Region. Organizations that satisfied all four of these principles were viewed as “core” social economy actors – those that met some criteria but not all were classified as “hybrid components.” The second step was to develop a schema for classifying the organizations by activity in order to classify, count, and make internal comparisons while examining a range of characteristics.

Through this rigorous research approach, Bouchard et al. (2008) developed a new measurement tool – the Information System on Social Economy. This tool brought together insights from various Canadian and Québec studies of the social economy with the classification categories used in the North America Industrial Classification system. This new tool, may also contribute to improving comparisons of international classification systems for the social economy.

In the west, BALTA also adopted a multi-stage approach to measuring the social economy: first identifying social economy organizations through an initial survey followed by an in-depth questionnaire, to be followed by a third round of case studies. BALTA also drew on the portraiture work coming out of Québec, using a similar conception of the social economy to Bouchard et al. (2006). As their work unfolded, however, and BALTA’s final sample stood at only 213 organizations,<sup>1</sup> the researchers felt hesitant to take too hard a line in determining who would be included in the sample. If they attempted to meet all four criteria, their sample size fell to only 77 organizations. The BALTA researchers opted for including the larger sample size in order to have a closer look at these intertidal zones.

Based on Lewis’s (2006) definition of the social economy and drawing on the Montreal study (Bouchard et al., 2008) by the Canada Research Chair of the Social Economy, the BALTA researchers expanded the scope of their definition by using four binding and two optional criteria.<sup>2</sup> Similar, and yet different to the Québec study they could now categorize “core” and “marginally affiliated” social economy actors<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This number is quite low considering that a 2003 study of non-profit and volunteer organizations had indicated that there were 39,500 such organizations in the two provinces (cited in Affolderbach & Gismondi, 2009, p. 7)

<sup>2</sup> For example, one significant difference between the two studies is that “democratic governance” was viewed as optional in the BALTA project. Although acknowledged as a “defining characteristic” of social economy organization organizations, this criterion was viewed as optional “at this stage” so as not to prematurely omit any organization (Affolderbac, Grismondi, & Soots, 2008, p. 5)

<sup>3</sup> BALTA’s criteria (2009): Organizations need to (1) have an explicitly stated social and/or environmental purpose/mission; (2) achieve social /environmental purpose (s) by engaging, at least in part, in trade-related market activity; (3) be accountable to a defined constituency; (4) reinvest surpluses back into the community or into the organization/enterprise for the purpose of achieving social/environmental goals; (5) not distribute profits to individuals and (6) engage in democratic governance\* (\* indicates the optional criteria).



(Affolderbach & Gismondi, 2009, p. 8) but from a slightly different standpoint. This classification schema would give them the maximum opportunity to connect with actors in the social economy (ibid., p. 5). The authors note, however, as a result of this choice, there is no comparable database in Canada.

A nation-wide survey in 2003<sup>4</sup> found that the northern regions of Canada have more non-profits and volunteer organizations than any other region of Canada; however, a complete census of social economy organizations had never been taken (Southcott et al., 2010, p. 8). In 2008, the Northern Node undertook this task with a census to determine main activities and location of social economy players; this was to be followed by a survey focused on documenting a variety of characteristics (Southcott & Walker, 2008). Once again, the work of Bouchard et al. (2006) influenced their definition of the social economy. They identified social economy organizations based on a broad definition of activities serving the community and included Indigenous traditional economies, as well as state driven initiatives.

## Mapping the Social Economy: Focusing the Lens at Different Levels

Across the country in the Prairies, Ontario and Atlantic Canada and including the efforts of each of the nodes named above, a range of studies focused on mapping regional and local social economy players in a number of different ways. While each of the nodes undertook some mapping or portraiture research, they did not approach this work in the same way. We must also note that not all of the mapping reports were available to make full comparisons across the nodes. Here we explore the variety, scope and characteristics of the majority of available reports, which provide a greater understanding of the contours of the social economy in Canada.

As described above, in the northern region a census of social economy players was undertaken in 2008 (Southcott & Walker). From this study researchers will be able to compare the state of the social economy in the four northern regions – Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, and Nunavik and Labrador. This work is still ongoing and a full analysis is not yet available; however, several second stage studies drawing on this data set have been completed. Two examples follow.

Drawing on the 2008 census, researchers were able to delve deeper into the barriers and the opportunities for social economy organizations in Nunavut (Southcott et al., 2010). Based on this empirical work, they argue that Nunavut

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<sup>4</sup> 2003 *National Survey of Non-Profits and Volunteer Organizations* - For details see Statistic Canada Report, 2005.

has a higher percentage of social economy organizations than other regions of the North partly because of the early development of co-operatives within the territory. Social economy organizations in Nunavut (N=295) provide activities and services that elsewhere are often provided by the “profit-oriented, private sector.” Social economy organizations in Nunavut were found to be younger than their counterparts in the other regions. The two most significant challenges social economy organizations faced were: retaining paid staff and decreased government funding. While the findings also indicate signs of healthy future growth, respondents indicated that further research on general economic and social issues may help deal with obstacles the sector faces and point out new opportunities for growth.

A second northern mapping study of the volunteer and non-profit sector took place in Yellowknife and focused on the city as the geographical parameters for the study (Sabin, 2011). Building on the 2008 northern social economy census report, Sabin identified a potential 106 cases that fit the definitional criteria. It is important to acknowledge, this was one of the first times a study was done on the social economy where there was an existing sampling frame to work from. The research, however, was only able to cover “settler organizations.” The study concluded that even though the social economy is a significant driver of the local economy, the sector does not have a sense of unity and state-sector relationships, which influence the shape of the volunteer and non-profit sector in Yellowknife, are poor. Further, there is a strong need in the city for the services social economy organizations provide as the private sector cannot adequately cover these services.

As discussed above, BALTA researchers conducted an on-line survey. They found that of 213 social economy organizations, a majority have a community focus for their activities, rather than provincial or beyond (Affolderbach, Gismondi, & Soots, 2008). The average age of social economy organizations was found to be 22 years. This was similar to the study by Bouchard et al. (2008); social economy bodies in Montreal were on average 19 years in operation. The BALTA study found that the large number of small social economy organizations provided the majority of employment in the sector. The majority (85.4%) of respondents claimed some form of social mission, while only 26.7% claimed to have an environmental mission.

The Southern Ontario node also undertook a province wide study on the size and scope of the social economy for the purpose of developing a data set of social economy organizations (Lasby & Ventry, 2008). The researchers used a broad, inclusive definition of the social economy; including co-ops, mutuals, non-profits,

credit unions and social purpose businesses in their study. Their final results; however, were not available for comparisons here. Building on the province wide study, two additional in-depth surveys were carried out; one on social purpose businesses and the other on co-ops and credit unions in Ontario (more details on the latter study below).

An interesting thread that surfaced overtly in two studies was the view that “it is important to understanding the similarities, differences, and contributions of the social economy in urban, rural, and northern [regional] contexts” (Brown, Findlay, & Dobrohoczki, 2011, p. 10). This comment arose from a case study mapping the social economy in the community of La Ronge. This northern Saskatchewan community is composed of three smaller communities, one of which includes six reserves of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band – the largest First Nation in Saskatchewan. The researchers argue that it is important to be familiar with the local context so communities can “take full advantage of the social economy’s ability to address critical economic, social, and cultural issues” (2011, p. 10).

Acknowledging that the specific character of the local context shapes the contours of the social economy landscape, a similar theme was echoed in the study of social economy organizations in Nunavut discussed above. While similarities exist across regions, it is the blend of the unique and the common that can be most helpful for understanding current conditions and being able to use the research findings for further development planning.

In Québec, this concern for the importance of focusing on the local context seems to hold as the researchers took a strong regional approach to mapping the social economy. Separate studies were done in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean (Tremblay et al., 2011), Ottawa River Valley (MCE Conseils, 2007), Maurice (Morissette, Lequin, & O’Cain, 2009), Bas-Saint-Laurent (Landry, 2008), and Chaudière-Appalaches (Comeau, 2009) to uncover the vision, characteristics, impact, trends, and influences on social economy players in each district.

Shifting from the large-scale approach to the local, Landry (2008) studied four arts and cultural organizations in Bas-Saint-Laurent. He focused on a set of six key characteristics. For each organization a short case study (monogram) was then developed. In the second stage, the four organizations could now be compared. The researchers found that although all four organizations were part of the social economy and had a focus on arts and culture, all had “a different situation and were distinguished by the characteristics of its sector of activity, its geographic location and how it was organized and financed.”

Whether or not a node undertook a broad survey of all social economy organizations, most did endeavour to do an inventory or related mapping study of co-ops and credit unions in their region. The Atlantic node focused their broad-range mapping activities on the co-operative sector (Thériault, Skibbens, & Brown, 2008). Their research highlights how co-ops and credit unions are a significant player in the economy of Atlantic Canada. Almost 300 co-ops and credit unions participated from all four Atlantic provinces. These organizations represented over half a million total members (some people are counted more than once). Their total number of employees, full and part-time, was 6,800.

The Southern Ontario Node also conducted a census of co-ops and credit unions (Ontario Co-op Association, 2007). In their study the count was over 1300 co-ops, credit unions and *caisse populaires* of which 54% completed the survey. The co-op sector in Ontario holds over 30 billion in assets; it employed and provided benefits to up to 16,500 people; had 1.4 million members in total; and engaged over 49,000 volunteers.

Co-ops have played a very important role in providing goods and services to many northern residents – particularly in Inuit communities. In the North, one way that mapping of co-ops and credit unions manifested was the Northern Co-op Galleria (MacPherson & Alsop, 2010). With the assistance of Arctic Co-operative Limited – the largest co-op in the North, field work was undertaken to begin the process of mapping and developing case studies of co-ops operating in some of Canada's most isolated communities. These social economy organizations represent over 30 billion in assets; they employ and provide benefits to up to 16,500 people; have 1.4 million members in total; and engage over 49,000 volunteers.

Several mapping projects were specifically aimed at social enterprises. In addition to a study of all social economy organizations, BALTA researchers were also interested in focusing specifically on social enterprises (Elson & Hall, 2010). In this study, a social enterprise was defined as: a business venture, owned or operated by a non-profit organization that sells goods or provides services in the market for the purpose of creating a blended return on investment: financial, social, environmental and cultural (p. 10). Of 295 social enterprises identified in the first phase, 140 participated in the survey, 105 in BC and 35 from Alberta. Just over half (51%) of the social enterprises in BC were set up to provide employment, training, and placement support while this was true for only 22% of the Alberta cases. Of the social enterprises that responded to the survey, together they generated over \$113 million in revenues. They paid \$63 million in wages and salaries to 4,500

people; trained 11,670 people; and provided services to over 678,000 with the help of 6,780 volunteers.

## Social and Economic Impacts

Across the country, researchers were able to document real figures that demonstrate the economic and social impact of the social economy. In the section above some examples are given that demonstrate the contribution of social economy organizations. Here we provide a few more cases.

One of the biggest economic benefits of the small – but many – social economy organizations is the impact on employment in a given region. In Montreal, the social economy sector employs over 66,000 people; this includes the Desjardins Group and Federated Coop (Bouchard, Guimont-Marceau, & Lessard, 2008). Even without these major players, social enterprises in Montreal generate over \$2 billion annually and engage over 100,000 volunteers.

In the Ottawa River Valley, 2.1% of all jobs in the region were created through the social economy (MCE Conseils, 2007). The generation of 3,850 full-time equivalent jobs is a major impact on this region. The social economy sector is also viewed as important for the future vitality in the region because of its diversification.

In northern regions, social economy organizations generate approximately \$132 million (Southcott et al., 2010). In general, their revenues are increasing, while government funding is decreasing. Social economy organizations are also known to provide many services when other companies pull out of small communities or as governments cut back on providing services.

In Québec, Simard and Saucier (2008) examined the impact of organizations – including co-operatives – on the region of Bas-Saint-Laurent. In addition to mapping the social economy organizations in the region, the researchers were interested to discern if these organizations had any impact on poverty and social inclusion. First they mapped the geographic locations of social economy organizations to identify the communities with the highest densities of social economy organizations and then document features of both the organizations and the communities. They then compared key variables of communities with a high number of social economy organizations to communities with fewer social economy organizations. Using this comparative lens the researchers found that the social economy played a vital role in combating economic and social regional disparities.

## Key Challenges

While social economy organizations provide many benefits to their communities, they are not without their challenges.

Across the country, shortfalls due to cuts in government spending and services greatly impact residents. In some northern regions this is very much the case (Southcott et al., 2010, p. 56). In Nunavut, researchers found funding was the most important need of social economy organizations; followed by the need to provide staff training and development.

Two studies on the social economy in Québec, reported that one of the greatest challenges is the need for a common vision/definition of the social economy as some parts are excluded or included depending on the definition used in funding formulas (Landry, 2008; MCE Conseils, 2007). For example, sometimes co-ops are included while at other times they are not. Another concern is when the social economy is limited to non-profit and volunteer organizations the sector can be “reduced” to the fight against poverty and “sentenced” to permanent dependence on external support. As a result, there is some concern that if an initiative becomes profitable, then it will no longer be considered part of the social economy and may be cut-off from core funding support. This weakens, and narrows, the image of the sector and can influence the strategies and policies developed to support it. This in turn affects resources deployed (human resources, money and infrastructure) as well as strategies to support the growth of the sector.

In Alberta and B.C., researchers noted how a piecemeal approach to the growth of the social economy has negatively impacted planning. They claim that development of the social economy has been more the result of reactive practices on the part of government to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups (Sousa & Hamdon, 2010).

Another challenge identified is that financial support and various forms of aid are often concentrated in the start-up phase of an initiative. This again can lead to serious gaps in follow-up resources dedicated to the social economy sector.

## Other Ways of Mapping the Social Economy

Beyond identifying members of the social economy and documenting certain key features, researchers also mapped the availability of various resources in, and for, the sector or highlighted other dimensions of the social economy. Below, we briefly elaborate on some of these efforts.

## Mapping Financial Resources

An important support for any social economy organization is funding. Social economy initiatives require funding for many purposes as they go through the various stages of emerging, becoming established and evolving. Often, staff or volunteers do not always know where to go for potential funding. To make this vital resource more available for social economy initiatives and enhance organizational capacity, some nodes undertook “mapping” of funders and investors as a way to better understand the state of social economy capital markets, identify gaps and contribute to building the sector. BALTA researchers (Enterprising Non-Profits, n.d.) created a searchable database that included information on the funders’ mandates, the target groups they serve, the type of capital and the stage of development they are most likely to support. The Northern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan node completed a scan of financing providers (government, credit unions, banks, community funds) in their three provinces (Wuttunee, Rothney, & Gray, 2008). In their survey of these financial institutions, one of the questions they asked respondents was their understanding of the term “social enterprise.” They found responses varied considerably and in some cases reflected that this was not a well-understood term.

At the other end of the country and on the other side of the coin, researchers in Prince Edward Island mapped the impact of changes in federal and provincial government funding and policy supports that exist for social economy organization (Wynne, 2007). In an environment where recent federal cutbacks had been announced, representatives of 30 social organizations shared their experiences and concerns about government funding departments. They discussed the impact of “fiscal reorganization” on their operations. From this work, a number of preliminary policy recommendations and community-oriented solutions were identified.

Another variation of the financial mapping theme came from Québec where, in 2008, up to 40 local trading systems existed that allowed members to exchange goods and services using a locally produced (“parallel”) currency (Boulianne, D’Avignon, & Castillo, 2009). Services provided and used are accounted for within the community system. These trading systems fall into two types: large networks that may have a staff member and small, intimate social groups. Researchers studied a variety of characteristics (member demographics, size, usage, reason for joining, etc.) to gain a better understanding of the economic, social and ideological dimensions for how these trading networks meet the needs of a diverse membership.

## Mapping Infrastructure

Another form of “mapping” was conducting literature reviews on appropriate themes and discerning the coverage and insights on that topic from earlier studies. One BALTA team conducted such a mapping exercise to examine three aspects of infrastructure available to the sector (Heaslip, 2007). This included: development finance (who is doing this, approaches, enabling and hindering factors); an overview of existing policy and programs impacting the social economy; and opportunities for future leadership training and capacity building.

## Mapping Using Tools for Social Accounting

Within the social economy sector the term “triple bottom line” is used to refer to the economic, social and environmental impacts of the initiative or sector. To highlight the social impact of social economy organizations, Brown (2008) undertook a study of “social accounting” practices of co-operatives and credit unions in Canada. This works documents the variety of approaches to social accounting adopted in the co-op sector and the experiences in using these approaches to demonstrate how practices have proven useful and the variety of credible forms they may take. Drawing on the experiences in the co-op sector, this study demonstrates how social accounting tools may be beneficial for other social economy organizations.

## Capacity Building and Resource Mapping

In several studies researchers were interested in some form of asset mapping or an environmental scan of services provided in the community. One study from Saskatchewan surveyed existing programs and support services available for Aboriginal people returning from incarceration (Findlay & Lanceley, 2009). They were interested to map existing transitional programs and training opportunities, as well as to identify employers open to partnering with support agencies and, to locate gaps in the services.

On a different note, in PEI, researchers examined the use of communication tools used by social economy organizations (Russell, 2010). Of 466 study participants, face-to-face meetings were the most common communication tool; followed by email and then telephone. The study identified barriers and benefits and found that accessibility and capacity to maximize use of the tools were the primary factors influencing usage.



## Mapping Social Capital

Social capital is an important concept in the social economy. The Atlantic Node actually had as their motto the social capital catch phrase: Bridging, Building, and Bonding. One of the projects coming out of this node was to do profiles of their community partners. This report itself then became a tool for bridging, building and bonding among the partners (Miller, 2011).

In northern Canada, researchers looked at the role of volunteers in the social economy and what motivated them to engage in these endeavours (McClelland et al., 2008). The study found two categories of personal benefits – rewards and reciprocity, and relationship building – were positively influenced by interactions among volunteers and activity participants. The study concludes that understanding the relationship between social capital and volunteering experiences is important for understanding the social economy.

In a second northern study, 20 women were asked about their experience working in the social economy sector and what motivated them (Hoshizaki, n.d.). Five themes emerged: having a sense of community, the importance of contributing to change, personal beliefs and goals, feelings of responsibility, and economic influence.

## Mapping and Policy

When representatives of social economy organizations on PEI were brought together to discuss the impact of, among other topics, recent federal budget cuts to their operations participants realized there had never been a systematic study of the impact of changes to government support for social economy organizations on PEI (Wynne, 2007). The researchers set out to map levels of funding and policy support that were in existence and to examine the impact of changes. Participants offered many recommendations. This study illustrates an example of how participatory action research may be used to both study and advance the social economy sector. The research participants were the representatives of the social economy organizations. The researcher is tapping the knowledge of these front line social economy workers who have informed opinions on government public policy and the impact changes will have on their social constituency. This “data” was then compiled into a document which captures the participants’ views and preliminary recommendations were laid out – ready for the sector representatives to use as an advocacy tool in their work.

Another good example of innovative ways to map the social economy and the theme of policy also comes out of PEI. In the Tyne Valley region, residents came together to create The Quality of Island Life Co-operative and a system of mapping “Community Accounts.” The purpose of the co-op is to promote discussion around what quality of life means on the Island and develop a set of indicators – established by Islanders – on what describes the quality of life on the Island (LeVangie et al., 2009). Drawing on the responses, the co-op maintains an on-line tool that provides information to, and about, communities. Here the research is deeply embedded into the life (mission) of the social economy organization. This data can be further refined for advocacy purposes.

### **Mapping Social Issues: Resiliency, Food Security and Fair Trade**

Sometimes “mapping” the social economy took the form of mapping the terrain of a social issue.

Two studies coming out NOMS focused on mapping the social economy and impacts in an urban setting. One study set in Saskatoon, focused on the impact of re-development of the inner core after a downward spiral. Researchers mapped the challenges, obstacles and disappointments as well as the achievements and moments of promise as this neighbourhood was rebuilt using a community-led development process (Diamantopoulou & Findlay, 2007). In another study, in Sault Ste. Marie a community-based research initiative focused on supporting the community to become more resilient (Ortiz & Savory-Gordon, 2006). Qualitative data of people’s perceptions of their community combined with supporting data provided new, local knowledge on community resiliency. Community action research was used to gather and disseminate data and information that initiates change.

The topic of food security was a common sub-theme in the mapping cluster. Food security was mapped in several innovative ways. In one study a national scan was conducted to identify gaps in existing research on food security (Carlsson et al., 2008). In the Chaudière-Appalaches region of Québec, researchers conducted an inventory of community gardens in the region and their impact and contribution to the local economy (d’Avignon, Boulianne, & Galarneau, 2009).

While farmers on PEI were participating in a study to support and encourage farmer-citizen engagement (PEI Food Security Network), in southern Ontario a selected group of organic farmers were interviewed to determine challenges and opportunities they all faced (Sumner & Llewelyn, 2009). Based on interviews with

forty-nine farmers, common and interconnected challenges to marketing their produce were identified.

The Quality of Island Life Co-operative mentioned earlier is a good example of social economy mapping used for examining environmental issues (LeVangie et al., 2009). A related issue is fair trade. McMurtry and Reed (2010) conducted research focusing on standards of fair and ethical trade and the role of local procurement policies in promoting them. The study reviewed policies at three levels of government: school boards, universities and municipalities.

## Mapping and Vulnerable Populations

Mapping of the social economy can also mean mapping the location of vulnerable populations within the social economy, how they are participating (or not) and how they are being supported through community-centered programs.

In Manitoba researchers looked at ethno-cultural organizations and factors that influence their success (Bucklaschuk & Sormova, 2011). In northern Ontario a study examined the contribution of the francophone community to the social economy of the region (Bagaoui, Labrie, & Howald, 2009). In Saskatchewan, researchers undertook a survey of services for First Nations returning from incarceration back into their communities (Findlay & Lanceley, 2009). In Montreal researchers developed a portrait of the situation of young people in and challenges with employment (Dumais, Shields, & Lessard, 2009).

In Atlantic Canada, social economy mapping was used to focus on opportunities for a Mi'kmaq community craft co-operative (McMillan & Prosper, 2011). The researchers versed themselves in the social economy of the Paqtnekek Mi'kmaq and identified opportunities and challenges for entrepreneurship within this cultural context.

An innovative example from PEI of social economy mapping is the storybook report titled *Community Storytelling and Locally Informed Immigrations Services* (Howard, 2009). This 12-page story documents the voices and experiences of first generation born Chinese immigrants living in PEI and illustrates the power of storytelling for documenting and disseminating the lived experiences of social economy actors.

In solidarity with social economy actors in other countries, some mapping projects focused on the experiences of communities in other parts of the world. One such study examined microenterprise as a tool for motivation and

empowerment for the people on the small island of Chiloé in southern Chile who experience economic exclusion in their region (D'Ambrogi & Novaczek, 2009).

## Methods for Mapping the Social Economy

In reviewing how these many research studies from across the country designed innovative, systematic and insightful ways of mapping the social economy, one can see that there is no one way of approaching this inter-disciplinary field of inquiry. The many new approaches that refine our ability for mapping and measuring its landscape demonstrate the emerging edge of this field.

While most quantitative studies used the basic survey format to capture information, new more scientific, systematic measurement frameworks were developed, advancing the whole field of study of the social economy. A second important advancement for mapping the social economy in the future will be that lists, inventories, and data banks of information on social economy organizations, now exist. Researchers experimented with developing sampling frames and came up with new ideas for how to create them.

The internet was another innovative feature of this body of research. Does it serve as a bridging, building and bonding agent to build the social economy? It was certainly used as a strong tool not only for locating data on the social economy but for administering surveys and for disseminating the findings.

The Information System on Social Economy Organizations tool developed by social economy researchers in Montreal makes several important contributions to advance the field of inquiry. First, it is a more refined tool for measuring the social economy organizations – it addresses questions of where the boundaries are and how to categorize certain differences so as to be able to do better comparison work among like groups. Second, better measurement means clearer, stronger information for policy advocates to work with in supporting development of the sector. Third, it addresses the debate on the definition of the social economy not by offering another definition but by embracing the differences. Fourth, by tightening the margin of statistical error, researchers can make more accurate generalizations by sampling “representative samples.” Fifth, developing measurement standards that are on par with the international measurement standards allows for a greater level of bridging, building and bonding with the larger solidarity economy and with conventional fields of inquiry.

While quantitative methods were used for many of the large scale mapping

projects, only a few studies developed hypotheses to test in the field. Drawing on factors identified in the literature as influencing social economy development, McLean (n.d.) developed six hypotheses to test in the northern context. The literature indicated that social economy development has been found to be influenced by the availability of social capital, population size, education level, employment, age, mobility and resource dependency. In northern regions, however, other than the increasing size of community, the relationship is not clear between social economy development and these social variables.

A national quantitative statistical study measured the impact of the social economy (i.e., co-operatives) on the economic vitality and quality of life in the communities where they were located (Kangayi, Olfert, & Partridge, n.d.). The researchers hypothesized that communities with high levels of co-op activity (social capital) would grow faster or decline more slowly than those with low levels. The national level data failed to show clear evidence of a relationship between these two variables.

Two interesting qualitative studies demonstrated the use of grounded theory and the development of socio-grams as a way of mapping social capital. In the Yukon, Hardy (2009) set out to study the barriers to co-op development in the territory given that presently there are only 4 registered co-ops in the territory. The researcher used snowball sampling and triangulation to identify cases to interview. Triangulation refers to using several sources to verify your data. After conducting interviews with knowledgeable parties, the interviews were coded and analysed using multi-stage coding (open, axial and selective) to develop an explanation of factors that might positively influence co-op development in the Yukon.

In the community of Sunnyside-Hillhurst (Alberta), BALTA researchers looked at “internal” characteristics of the local social economy as a way of mapping formal and informal relationships between social economy players and other organizations. From this data they developed a visual socio-gram of community social capital relations (BALTA, n.d.).

## Summary and Looking Forward

This thematic summary on mapping the social economy in Canada is itself only a sketch of the rich and varied research landscape composed of all the documentation produced through the CSERPs collective work. This chapter provides a glimpse of the great variety of ways researchers approached mapping the social economy and a snapshot of what they found. It is not a complete summary

of all the mapping work that was done through CSERP, but nonetheless, it does provide a view of the contours of the emerging terrain. Through this summary we gain both a better understanding of the state of the social economy in Canada and, at the same time, we can find some direction for the next round of mapping work.

Through the efforts across the country to map the “big picture,” a pan-Canadian patchwork quilt of sorts starts to emerge. From the North, across British Columbia and Alberta, through parts of the Prairies, regions of Québec and, especially Montreal – the foundational mapping of the broad picture of the social economy is well underway. Through Ontario and Atlantic Canada came a strong focus on mapping the co-op and credit union sector, which we can now build on. The regional mapping work provides a useful framework for both future work to continue developing the national portrait, and for locating community level mapping projects within a regional context that lends itself to comparisons and groupings around shared themes.

The much needed sampling frames for identifying social economy players have received some focused attention and resources so that future mapping work will have a new starting place and we now have an early benchmark for documenting future trends. Indeed, this whole chapter provides a wealth of ideas for ways to map the social economy and the basis for curriculum material to teach a methodology course on doing just that. What are the myriad ways we can map the social economy? What have we learned from these efforts? What are the unique and/or special features of the social economy that require particular approaches to ensure important nuances are captured? How do we continue to refine our measurement tools? What insights would longitudinal studies provide so that we can see the long-term impacts of certain policies and strategies? These are just a few questions to start the discussion.

We now have a better sense of the health, the challenges, the resources, the capacity, the practices, the strengths, and so on of the social economy in various regions and across regions. We have some new tools and many new insights. The size and diversity of our Canadian social economy landscape provides many challenges for mapping her contours, but through the combined efforts to document and to know the many dimensions of our shared terrain, there is movement toward mutuality of a common destiny in which we are all partners. These efforts to map the social economy provide an important foundation from which to move forward.

# CHAPTER 2

## Social Enterprises and the Social Economy

Joy Emmanuel

### Introduction

Social enterprises are a key component of a healthy social economy. They are one member of the family of social economy organizations. Some social economy researchers define social enterprises broadly and some are more specific, however, they all agree they are businesses with a purpose that contributes back to the well-being of the community in a variety of ways.

### Overview

In this chapter we will examine these social purpose businesses by providing an overview of what community-university researchers reported in their findings about social enterprises across the country.

We begin with an examination of the various ways of defining and mapping social enterprises. This is followed by a review of a cluster of case studies that illustrate key elements of social enterprises and their role in local social economies. Next, we visit the third “line” of the triple bottom line – the environment – and learn how some social enterprises are attempting to address concern for the environment. From a focus on enterprises, we briefly shift the spotlight to social entrepreneurs. A short section on job creation and provision of services highlights ways social enterprises are being used to help address barriers to employment for some groups and how they contribute to rural revitalization through providing important services. In the closing sections, we explore what kinds of support social enterprises need, the impact of policy frameworks, and close with a short foray into aspects of financing these social purpose businesses.

### Definitions and Mapping

Social economy organizations play a vital role in communities across the country. These organizations provide services from education, to health, to housing,

employment, training, personal support, recreation, legal counsel, and a vast variety of other services, as well as offering an array of goods. While the term social economy organizations can be used to refer to the totality of all organizations operating in the social economy, “social enterprises” refers to a narrower band of social economy organizations – that said, there are still different ways that researchers define this term.

One study of social enterprises in Québec (Jacob, 2010) drew on the definition in the *Chantier de l'économie sociale*, 2001.<sup>5</sup> Here social enterprises are defined as:

All the operations and organizations, coming out of collective entrepreneurship, which are organized around the following principles and rules:

1. The social enterprise serves its members or the community rather than just generating profits and focusing on financial performance;
2. It is managed independent of the State;
3. It includes in its constitution democratic processes involving users and worker-users;
4. It defends the primacy of people and work over capital in the distribution of its profits and revenue; and,
5. Its activities are based on the principle of participation, support and keeping a balance between individual and collective responsibility. (p. 9)

Jacob's study provides an analysis of social enterprises in Québec by examining their legal and governance frameworks and the challenges and benefits of each model. This study includes co-operatives, mutual associations and non-profits that fit the above criteria.

In a survey of social enterprises in BC and Alberta, BALTA researchers defined social enterprises a little more narrowly. In their study a social enterprise is:

A business venture owned or operated by a non-profit organization that sells goods or provides services in the market for the purpose of creating a blended return on investment; financial, social, environmental and cultural. (Elson & Hall, 2010, p. 10)

Using this definition, they generated a list of 295 “confirmed” cases (independently verified) of social enterprises in BC and Alberta - 231 in BC and 64

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<sup>5</sup> Chantier de l'économie sociale (2001). *De nouveau, nous osons Document de positionnement stratégique*, Montréal. p. 28.



in Alberta. (This study is discussed further in the chapter on “Mapping the Social Economy.”)

Researchers from southern Ontario also mapped social enterprises under the label of “social purpose businesses” (Dart, Armstrong, & Clow, n.d.). They also defined social economy as: a business venture intended to create social value along with revenue generation. They identified only 82 “social-purpose-like” businesses (SPB) in Ontario. From this pool they further identified four models for how SPBs are structured: simple SPBs, non-profit parent organization running a simple SPB, non-profit parent administers and directs a number of “quasi-independent” SPBs, or non-profit parent supporting a number of businesses. In this study the populations most often served through the operation of the SPBs were: at risk youth, newcomer/immigrants, people with mental health challenges, and low income individuals. The study concludes that SPBs are more complex and have more challenges than revealed in the business literature to date.

Another study out of Ontario, also focused on mapping social enterprises using the four of the principles named earlier as the criteria (social purpose business, member/public participation, voluntary participation, democratic processes); however, this research focused on social enterprises that “rely on the internet to meet their primary organizational objectives” (Ryan, 2008). Using snowball sampling and web searches, 74 internet-based social enterprise businesses were identified. These on-line enterprises primarily fell into three categories: civil society, community economic development, and health.

In a Québec study examining the success factors influencing social enterprises in rural settings researchers distinguished “capitalist” from social enterprises by determining “that the enterprise requires a democratic function that can identify and find appropriate solutions to the problems faced by the community and makes the most of workers, volunteers and citizens in the process” (Caillouette et al., 2006). A second distinction was “the collective aspect ... because it requires that even before start up, there must be a group of individuals involved.”

## Case Study Research

A number of social enterprise case studies were done focusing on certain aspects of social enterprises in specific sectors. These studies demonstrate the wide array of goods and services social enterprises provide.

From Atlantic Canada came two case studies focusing on social enterprises

and coastal communities. *Fishing for the Future* is the story of Coastal Communities Network (CCN) – a social economy organization that grew out of a community response to the downturn in the fisheries in the early 1990s (Romanow & Munro, 2008). CCN became a vital link among isolated fishing communities to help them realize their common plight and united strength as they worked together to address the crisis. The organization has continued on for the past 15 years and has grown into an active network of over 240 community-based organizations. Using asset mapping and best practices identification, the objective of this study was to support CCN in moving from a non-profit organization dependent on government grants and project funding to development of an economically, self-sufficient social enterprise.

The second study focused on the island communities of Miscou and Lamèque off the Acadian coast of New Brunswick (Chouinard et al., 2009). This study describes the role of three key social enterprises that shaped life on the islands and helped residents meet their needs: the Fishermen's Cooperative Association, the Fisheries Cooperative Association Lamèque and the Caisse Populaire Islands. They are described as the pillars of the islands' social economy. (This study is discussed further in the chapter on "Co-operatives and the Social Economy.")

From Alberta comes a case study on Farmer Direct Co-operative Limited. This study raises such questions as: what social enterprises exist within the local food system network, what capacity and support do they have, and what do they contribute to increasing local food security. The research provides an in-depth look at the operations, challenges, opportunities and potential to effect market changes in order to determine how one social enterprise can impact the local food market (Aupers, 2007a). A study out of New Brunswick examined the role of another marketing co-operative for small farmers (Michaud, 2010). La Récolte de Chez Nous (RCN) was set up to help farmers respond to changes related to the globalization of food markets. Once again the researcher examined questions around how farmer marketing co-operatives can contribute to regional food sustainability and build community partnerships that strengthen local food security.

Since 1997, the Québec government has helped fund the establishment of 101 homecare support social enterprises. These social purpose businesses mainly provide domestic support for persons with physical or cognitive disabilities. Since they were set up, these businesses have been the center of social and political tension as different interest groups attempt to influence their evolution. In this study, researchers analyze conditions around the development of these companies

and explore options for future directions (ARUC-ÉS - RQRP-ÉS, n.d.).

Much can be learned from successful as well as unsuccessful social enterprise initiatives. From Prince Edward Island comes a study of one co-op that did not succeed. Launching Entrepreneurial Advantages for Parents (LEAP) was formed with the intention of being a worker co-operative set up to employ parents living in a rural community of PEI. Although LEAP was not successful, it can still provide insights for future co-op development and policy recommendations. This study examined the social, economic and political context at both the provincial and federal level to uncover factors that contributed to the initial development of the co-op and later contributed to its demise (Novaczek, Pobjoy, & Gallant, 2010).

From fishing to farming, from health care to employment – all these themes are touched on when we look at the issue of fair trade and social enterprises. Fair trade can make a significant difference in the lives of producers in the global South. The production of fair trade products in the South, and marketing in the global North, go hand-in-hand with social enterprise development. One study by Mukherjee, McMurtry, and Reed (n.d.) examined the steps in the process of fair trade cotton production with an eye to supporting the development of a co-operative for the import and sale of fair trade cotton from India.

### **Social Enterprises and the Environmental Bottom Line**

Even though there were only a few studies focusing on the topic of social enterprises and sustainability, we give this sub-theme its own section to give voice to the principle of the triple bottom line. Although the social economy may be looked at as the leading edge of civil society for change, the emphasis has been primarily on the economic and social impacts of the sector. Soots (2008) argues that this is partly because the environmental awareness and concern is not that well developed within the sector.

In their mapping survey of social enterprises, Elson and Hall (2010) found only 38% of social enterprises in BC and 22% in Alberta operate to fulfill an environmental mission. Although it is encouraging that there is at least that many social enterprises focusing on the environment, if the triple bottom line is our goal, we still have a long way to go to achieve this standard.

One study highlighted the potential growth opportunities for social enterprises with a strong environmental focus. Examining “green communities” in Canada, Gliedt, Lynes, and Parker (2008) identified a network of non-profit environmental

service organizations (ESOs). They found that while ESOs provide a strong educational service, they are also a support and sometimes a springboard for “green community entrepreneurship.” Encouraging social innovation to address new and unmet needs, ESOs can provide a variety of tools and services to support their communities in becoming more sustainable. Examples of some green social enterprises they identified included: energy audits, retrofit services, watershed management, slow food programs, and waste management options.

### Social Entrepreneurs

Several studies attended to exploring the sub-theme of social entrepreneurs.

One study focused on the role of social entrepreneurs for a report to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) who was a partner organization in this study (Fontan, et al., 2008). The study involved a review of the literature and a qualitative survey of social entrepreneurs.

With a focus on both island life and the life experience of being an immigrant, a study by Baldacchino and McAndrew (2008) documented the multiple array of enterprises set up by immigrant social entrepreneurs on Prince Edward Island. From apiary operations to glass design, from holistic care to wineries, this research showcases a great array of small social economy businesses that illustrate the resourcefulness of recent immigrants working hard to meet their needs and, at the same time, contributing back to the well being of their community.

Moving to the Prairies, another study looks at the collective social entrepreneurial spirit of the Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association Co-operative (Pattison & Findlay, 2010). Adopting a new legal model in 2007, the Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association became a formal co-operative as a significant step in demonstrating “taking charge of its destiny and becoming entrepreneurial and sustainable in order to bring enhanced opportunities to its membership” (p. 10) while, at the same time, satisfying the demands of governments and future partners. As an active social enterprise working to meet members’ needs the co-op demonstrates how trapping is not a “heritage practice” but important for “representing the values of both the ongoing and revitalizing traditional economy and the social economy” (p. 10).

### Job Creation and Providing Services

A number of studies explored the positive impacts of social enterprises. Two topics that surfaced were: creating jobs for people experiencing barriers

to employment and creating jobs and providing services in rural and remote communities.

Two studies examined the role of social enterprises in creating employment for people faced with multiple barriers to entering the work force. Focusing on a BC context, Buczkowska (n.d.) sought to identify social enterprises set up to address this need, examine the related policy barriers and incentives, and better understand the operations and impacts of these social purpose businesses.

An Ontario-based study also reviewed the policy challenges facing social enterprises set up to employ people with disabilities (Broad & Saunders, n.d.). Taking an action-research approach the study provides empirical data from across the country on services and programs for people with disabilities. This information can now be used by sector players to facilitate peer learning about various models of service delivery through social enterprises. The literature and case study research demonstrated that social enterprises set up to employ people with disabilities are well suited for this role (given their ability to adapt the workplace environment, organizational expertise, and commitment to their social mission). Unfortunately, however, the researchers found there are only a handful of such enterprises. This is indeed unfortunate given their demonstrated capacity to respond to this community need.

Economic growth and community development are not necessarily the same thing. Examining the Alberta government's strategic plan for rural economic development, Aupers (2007b) analyzes the implications of the plan through a community economic development lens with an eye to how it may support or hinder the growth of social enterprises in rural communities.

Reviewing the literature on sustainable rural development and the social economy, Vallilillee (2007) focused on the relationship between natural resources and local development. Examining the role of social enterprises in various aspects of the resource sector (fishing, organic agriculture, non-timber forest products, renewable energy, and eco-tourism), the study highlights cross-sector issues relevant to social enterprises operating in these sectors in British Columbia. Factors contributing to their success or possible failure, as well as institutional and policy constraints are highlighted.

In *PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise* voices from the Northern Ontario Women's Economic Development Council Conference (2008) can be heard. This collection of conference papers provides a range of information relevant to a gathering of

businesswomen interested in being social entrepreneurs. As a social economy organization, PARO's tag line is *BUILD a business in Northern Ontario, GROW your community, CREATE a sustainable livelihood, It all starts here*. In the opening message, the conference co-ordinator, thanks the women present for being "dedicate[d] to yourself, your business, your community and the goal of sustainable community economic development in northern Ontario." Both of these statements reflect the intricate connection between individual and community well being, and acknowledge that social enterprises play an important role in that relationship – they are part of the local economy – not external players.

### Support

While social enterprises provide a variety of services to communities, they also require support in many different ways.

Survival rates of co-ops in BC and Alberta was the focus of one study undertaken by the BC Co-op Association in collaboration with the Alberta provincial co-op organization (Restakis & Aasgard, n.d.). There has been very little research on the formation and dissolution of co-ops in either of the two provinces. In BC, approximately 30 new co-ops form each year and some years there are as many as 70. In Alberta, co-op development has been significantly lower than BC. The recent introduction of Co-operative Development Initiative funding through the Co-operatives Secretariat has certainly influenced co-op development activities in both provinces. Knowing more about the patterns of development and dissolution could support the creation of more effective co-op development strategies.

One study from Québec looked at the factors that influence the success of social enterprises in the region of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. The researcher examined six case studies of social enterprises. Among the success factors this study found were: social capital, local resources, local expertise, institutional resources and community needs (Tremblay, 2010).

Following on the theme of what factors create a supportive environment for social enterprises, Sousa and LePage (2009) come at this question by developing and testing a tool for measuring four dimensions of "support" named in the BC Social Enterprise Summit Framework. These are defined as: 1) encourages awareness and demonstrates value, 2) enterprise skills, 3) access to capital, and 4) market opportunities. Scores for each dimension allow for comparison across four areas as indicators of strengths and where to put more focus.

Marketing principles that blend the promotion of social values into purchasing was the focus of a study on conscious consumer choices (BALTA, n.d.). The study claims, “when a purchaser makes purposeful decisions that blend economic, social and environmental impacts they can directly, and in a measureable and positive way, influence the health and sustainability of communities” (p. 3). To support social enterprises in social marketing, Enterprising Non-Profits of BC created the *Social Enterprise Purchasing Tool Kit*.

From the Southern Ontario node, two teams of researchers - Cape et al. (2008) and Mook et al. (2008) – focused on describing the development process and the tools developed for measuring social accounting practices for social enterprises. The tools provide a way to “account for” the social value of a social enterprise.

Human resource practices and policies of social economy organizations were reviewed in several studies. One study examined the causes and duration of work stoppages in social economy organizations (Akingbola, 2008). Over an 11 year period from 1994 – 2005, there were 196 work place stoppages due to labour disputes according to the Ontario Ministry of Labour. Many of these stoppages coincided with downsizing in the public sector and moving various services to non-profits while developing new funding programs.

In another study, researchers focused on six main areas of employee-employer work place practices (Verma & Akingbola, 2008). These included: recruitment and retention, teams, employee engagement, value-based decision making, size and organizational behaviour, and occupational health and safety. In a second paper, Verma, Akingbola, and Qian (n.d.) reported studying a sample of 561 non-profits that were a sub-sample in a 2005 survey of over 6,000 workplaces. In comparing the two groups they found a higher level of unionization in the non-profit sector, a higher percentage of part-time employees, lower total gross pay per employee, and more was paid on employer benefits by non-profits than by other businesses.

Following on the Human Resource theme, a study out of Québec looked at the “main mechanisms in place to promote the balance between management and democratic governance in a social enterprise” (Morin, 2008). The study acknowledged the challenges in meeting the triple bottom line; for to do so an organization must be both sustainable and financially viable while embracing democratic practices of solidarity and respect.

## Policies that Affect Social Enterprises

A small team of social economy researchers undertook an in-depth comparative study of conditions and supports for social enterprises in the provinces of Ontario and Québec. Five reports were produced comparing access to capital, legal and regulatory frameworks, organizational development, policy and research support. First, acknowledging that historical and cultural conditions are very different in the two provinces, Elson, Gouldsbrough, and Jones (2009a) set the stage through a contextual comparison. “A contextual comparison identifies analytically equivalent developments which may be expressed in very different terms, across different contexts” (2009, p. 4).<sup>6</sup> The “analytical equivalents” in this case are policies and programs in the five areas mentioned above and how they support the growth of social enterprises – and non-profits. The authors argue that the contextual differences are “fundamental to understanding the cultural and political differences which support some policies and marginalize others” (p. 14).

The report on access to sources of capital covers access to development capital, solidarity financing, and state financing. The authors claim that the study begins with a comparison of how social enterprises are defined in the two provinces.<sup>7</sup> The commonly used definition of social enterprises in Québec actually excludes co-operatives and non-profits. While the authors note that this distinction is not as common outside of Québec, they draw on a definition proposed by Quarter, et al. (forthcoming) which describes social enterprises as “a form of community economic development in which an organization exchanges services and goods in the market as a means to realizing its social objectives or mission” (p. 5). A further distinction is made by Quarter et al. between social economy businesses (which earn all of their revenue from the market place) and social enterprises (which generate a portion of their revenue from the market and are supplemented as well). The latter definition of social enterprises reflects a similar focus on the criterion of goods and services produced for the market place but it also acknowledges an interdependent relationship with the State.

In comparing access to capital for social enterprises in the two provinces and drawing on “contextual comparison,” the authors describe access to capital in Québec as “not only robust” but “it forms a financial ladder to increasing levels of

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<sup>6</sup> Locke, R. & Thelen, K. (1998) Problems of equivalence in comparative politics: Apples and oranges, again. *Newsletter of the ASPA Organized section in comparative politics*, 9(1), pp. 9-12, Cited in Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones (2009).

<sup>7</sup> See Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, pp. 4-5.



financial support;” whereas, in Ontario, they describe access to capital as a “game of snakes and ladders” (p. 17).

In the second report, the authors (Elson et. al., 2009) compare proposed changes to the “legal architecture” governing non-profits, charities<sup>8</sup> and social enterprises in the two provinces. While legal systems differ in Québec and Ontario, the legal acts governing non-profits and social enterprises in both provinces are described as “out-dated and cumbersome,” and, in both provinces, a consultation process is underway to introduce new changes. This report offers a detailed review of present and proposed legal changes related to incorporation, taxation and other aspects of governance and legal frameworks.

In *Voices of Community*, Elson and Rogers (2009) compare three apex organizations that represent social enterprises and non-profits; this includes: le Chantier de l’économie sociale; Le Réseau québécois de l’action communautaire autonome (RQ-ACA), and the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN). Differences are noted in their developmental stages, organizational and representative structures. The two organizations from Québec have received core funding for the past decade while ONN has had only three years of financial support from a private foundation. Le Chantier and RQ-ACA both operate as networks of networks. The ONN is in an earlier stage of building a network but taking a more informal approach with less sector support.

Breaking with the above comparative pattern, Mendell and Neamtan (2008) offer an analysis and overview of the history and growth of the social economy in Québec. The authors describe the importance of such social economy apex organizations as le Chantier because they provide a collective voice and a political one that represents, supports and extends the role of multiple single social economy organizations (such as social enterprises) to the point that the social economy has grown into a social movement able to challenge the prevailing economic model.

An important complimentary study to the work described above is a study out of the Québec node on various legal forms – such as co-ops, non-profits, associations and mutuals. The study by Jacobs (2010) (introduced above under definitions and mapping), provides an insightful analysis of social enterprises in Québec, comparing both the legal and governance frameworks and the resulting differences in effective operations. Through the legal model lens, organizational

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<sup>9</sup> For more on legal frameworks and charities, see: Manfro & Brouard (2009)

governance is investigated to identify key social elements integral to the democratic process in each model.

### Financing Social Enterprises

At least two nodes undertook a scan of “financial instruments” and “capital providers” supporting social enterprises in their regions. Seeking to improve financing options for social enterprises in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and northwestern Ontario, Wuttunee, Rothney, and Gray (2008) gathered information on everything from government backed loan guarantee programs to private funds, as well as options from credit unions and community-based funding. In this study, social enterprise was broadly defined as: “a for-profit enterprise that places a strong emphasis on social and environmental objectives as well as financial objectives. ... The enterprise will also have a clear plan for the application of profits or surpluses towards a social objective” (p. 1).

In total, 46 agencies were approached but only 13 completed the survey. The intent of the study was to gain a better understanding of: perceptions of social enterprises, financial services available, and specific lending criteria – such as equity and collateral. The study found that cash flow and the ability to repay debt are the main criteria funders use, while the business plan is the main assessment tool for determining repayment. Some funders did consider alternate forms of equity but this was done on a case by case basis. Only five agencies indicated that social mission was a consideration in their assessment.

In a second study, Wuttunee et al. (2008) again looked at financing, but this time from the perspective of social enterprises. They examined: financing strategies and how they change through the life of the social enterprise; the role of finance, including internal capital sources, grants, and patient capital; and the appropriate mix of financial instruments. Quoting Overholser (2002, p. 3), they define sustainability as the point where “there is enough cash flow from revenues to reliably cover the firm’s ongoing expenses ... and further injections of capital are no longer needed.” Through case study research set in Winnipeg, they uncover key aspects in the sustainability strategies of four social enterprises.

BALTA also gathered specific information on an array of agencies and programs that fund social enterprises. Enterprising Non-Profits BC, partnered with

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<sup>9</sup> Overholster, G. (2002). *Building is not buying: Designing, measuring and managing growth capital in non-profit enterprises*. Nonprofit Finance Fund. New York. Retrieved from <http://www.nonprofitfinancefund.org/docs/Building%20is%20not%20Buying.pdf>. Cited in Wuttunee et al. (2008, p. 3).

BALTA to create an on-line database of social enterprise capital providers in BC and Alberta. Another team of social economy researchers investigated questions of financing and social enterprises from the view of a credit union as a social economy financial institution and their role in financing social enterprises (Jackson, Henry, & Tarsilla, 2009). Focusing on corporate social responsibility (CSR), the researchers first compare corporate engagement in CED to CSR practices of a major credit union. As part of the evaluation process they examined a microloan program of the credit union to measure the specific impacts of the program and identify strategies for demonstrating to stakeholders the value of CSR.

## Summary and Looking Forward

We see from the research cited above that social enterprises come in many forms, play a variety of roles, and are at work in communities across the country. In some ways social enterprises have always been around and in other ways they are a relatively new phenomena (such as when non-profits set up a specific social purpose business). The criteria for defining social enterprises is key to how their numbers are counted in a region and can also be key to policy implications and resources available to support their work. This body of empirical research strengthens our understanding of the contribution social enterprises are making to people's lives and to communities, and it provides new insights to help us better understand – and support – this important aspect of a healthy social economy.



# CHAPTER 3

## Co-operatives and the Social Economy

Joy Emmanuel

### Introduction

Researchers examined the state of Canadian co-operatives from multiple angles during the course of the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnership project. Over 60 studies focused on co-operatives and credit unions in Canada. Most of these studies had the word “co-operative” as a key term in the title of the work indicating a very specific focus on some aspect of the co-op sector. In other reports co-ops were studied along with all social economy organizations or social enterprises in a given region.

### Overview

This cluster of studies provides a rich portrait of the multiple ways co-ops are used to serve members needs. They shed light on the challenges co-ops encounter, highlight opportunities for growth and illustrate best practices in the development and use of the co-op model. Through mapping the sector and gathering data on the size and characteristics of co-ops, they provide evidence-based data that sector players can use to lobby government and for promoting the contribution co-ops make to communities across the country. Through community-university partnerships many practical questions were addressed and new tools for governance and financial accounting were created that better reflect the co-operative difference.

Taken as a whole this body of research provides an overview of the size and scope of the co-op movement in Canada. Some studies focus on specific sectors, such as worker co-ops and housing; some provide insights into certain dimensions of the model through case study research; others illustrate various ways co-ops are used to address social issues, such as food security, fair trade and child care; new tools for measuring the co-operative difference were created; recommendations for co-op-friendly policies are set-out; the studies illustrate how co-ops are being used to meet the needs of specific populations, such as First Nations people,

recent immigrants and francophone people living outside of Québec; further documentation is provided on the history of the co-op movement in certain regions; and new insights arise on many questions related to best practices in co-op development.

This chapter provides a snap shot of the array of social economy research specifically focused on co-operatives and credit unions and undertaken through five years of CSERP projects. It is not a complete picture of all the studies that focused on the co-op sector, as regrettably time, resources, and availability influenced what could be covered. Nonetheless, the work summarized here demonstrates the strong roots of the co-op movement in the tapestry of the Canadian social economy, presents past and present challenges and contributions, and sheds light on the emerging issues and opportunities.

### Co-ops and Mapping

Research projects around mapping social economy organizations defined the target population in three different ways. Some focused on mapping all social economy organizations in a specific region, others focused specifically on social enterprises – including co-ops, and a third cluster centered specifically on mapping co-operatives and credit unions. The results of the mapping studies highlighting the economic contribution of co-ops to their region have been described in the chapter on *Mapping the Social Economy*; here, we discuss other characteristics and contributions of co-operatives from these mapping projects.

A study undertaken by Thériault, Skibbens and Brown (2008) found co-ops in the Atlantic region are strongly embedded in the broader co-op network. The 245 co-operatives and credit unions who participated in the Atlantic node's survey collectively had ties with 428 co-op federations and associations. The Nova Scotia Co-op Council and Co-op Atlantic were identified as the top two umbrella organizations co-ops were linked to; the Canadian Co-operative Association was also among the top four.

In line with the 7th International Co-operative Principle: Concern for Community, between 40% and 60% of the reporting co-operatives said they gave back to their communities through various forms of voluntary contributions.

Two-thirds of responding organizations in the Atlantic reported their membership numbers had stayed the same or increased in the past 3 years. In Ontario, the other region where co-ops and credit unions were specifically mapped,

close to 85% of participating co-ops reported the same number of members or an increase in the 3 previous years (Ontario Co-op Association, 2007). These trends seem to indicate that the co-op sector in these two regions of Canada is growing at a slow, but steady, rate.

A little over half of responding co-ops in Atlantic Canada indicated that volunteers were regularly engaged in co-op activities. Housing co-ops were the most likely to use volunteers (81%). In Ontario, close to 50,000 people volunteer each year in co-operative activities – 10,000 alone volunteer as directors.

Even with the strong community involvement, certain populations can be under-represented in the volunteer pool. Of the responding co-ops in Atlantic Canada “95% had no First Nations people on the board, 87% had no one with a disability on the board, 86% had no member of a visible minority on the board, and 75% had no youth on the board” (Thériault et al., 2008, p. 22). Women were much better represented, with close to 86% of co-ops having a woman on their board.

Two co-op mapping studies were reviewed in other chapters and are mentioned here to point them out to the reader. MacPherson and Alsop (2010) began the lengthy task of mapping Arctic co-ops. (see *Northern Co-operative Galleria* in the chapter on “The Social Economy and Indigenous Populations.”) Kangayi, Olfert, and Partridge (n.d.) examined the relationship between increased community size and growth of the co-op sector. (see *Measuring and Mapping the Impact of Social Enterprises* in the chapter on “Mapping the Social Economy.”)

## Co-operative Case Studies

Social economy researchers developed a number of case studies that demonstrate how co-ops and community economic development are deeply intertwined. These studies are useful for highlighting various dimensions of co-operative development and demonstrating how the principles and values of the Co-op Identity Statement are intricate to healthy co-operative business practices.

Fogo Island Co-operative is located on the largest island off the northeastern shore of Newfoundland - one of Canada’s remote communities (Haven & Haven, 2007). This case study tells the story of the first 20 years of the co-operative and a people-centered community development approach that became famous around the world as the “Fogo Process.” As hearty, independent fisher folks, the people of Fogo Island resisted the demands of Premier Joey Smallwood to modernize Newfoundland’s out-ports through a resettlement program requiring families

to move to larger, centralized locations. When the fish buying merchants and other businesses left Fogo Island, the community's response was first to found a general store owned by, and for, fishermen and later to expand into a co-operative community enterprise which would help keep capital circulating within the community and meet a variety of social and economic needs. The island's economy grew out of these co-operative efforts as the fishermen built boats and took over processing facilities. Established in the late 1960s the co-op has been central to the survival of the community for over 40 years.

From Saskatchewan, a study titled *Sharing Our Gifts: The Story of Ohpahow Wawesecikiwak Arts Marketing Co-operative Limited*, of Big River First Nation, focused on documenting a similar – yet different – story about how a co-operative played a central role in meeting the economic and social needs of the community. Examining organizational governance, ways to engage members, and the integration of traditional values and world views in business practices that serve the needs of the community, Findlay, Bear, and Pattison (2008) sought to identify key factors that contribute to the success of this Aboriginal artists' marketing co-operative.

Two examples of the innovative way solidarity co-ops are being used to sustain local communities come from Québec. Galarneau (2010) presents an in-depth study of the success of "Coop la Mauve," a solidarity co-op located in the Région Capital National/Chaudière-Appalaches. Faced with problems of rural "devitalization," solidarity co-ops were introduced in various regions of Québec to promote "sustainable development and a sense of belonging." The study examines the unique mission of the co-op with its membership formula intended to strengthen links between local producers, processors and consumers. The co-op's values uphold a triple bottom line through promotion of organic foods, fair trade and other eco-practices.

In exploring the success strategies of social economy organizations in the MRC of Val-Saint-François, researchers developed several case studies to illustrate the community development approaches they uncovered (Caillouette et al., 2010). One of those studies is of La Brunante, the first solidarity housing co-operative in Québec. Nestled in the heart of the village of Racine, La Brunante is a housing co-op for people over 70. The idea for the co-op arose at an AGM for the Caisse Desjardins where over 80 people readily committed to a \$500 share purchase. As a solidarity co-op, a key difference between La Brunante and most senior's residence is the strong engagement of the broader community "promoting solidarity and mutual assistance between the residents and the community."



From Atlantic Canada comes another study of a co-operative effort to create a business venture to meet the needs of rural, low-income women in Kings Co., Prince Edward Island (Novaczek, Pobjoy, & Gallant, 2010). While many benefits arose from their efforts, the enterprise was never able to be self-sufficient. The researchers examined this case study with an eye to what can be learned that may be helpful for other similar ventures.

## Co-ops and Specific Sectors

Worker co-ops and housing co-ops were the two sectors around which a cluster of research reports focused while social co-ops were also touched upon.

Studies explored various aspects of the worker co-op movement from the international arena, to the national level, down to a provincial focus. From the Social Economy Hub came a paper examining the success factors for the growth of the worker co-op movement in Italy, Mondragon and France (Corcoran & Wilson, 2010). The authors identified seven common elements the three movements shared, these include: accessible capital and technical support, having a concentration of co-ops by industry, and a strong sense of internal solidarity.

Having looked at success factors in other countries where the worker co-op movement is strong, in a second study, researchers examined the internal factors for success of worker co-ops in Canada (Hough, Wilson, & Corcoran, 2010). The study analyzed successful worker co-ops, as well as ones that failed, in an effort to learn from the experience in the Canadian worker co-op movement around building a strong sector. A third study, out of Saskatchewan, investigated the current and potential state of the worker co-op sector in that province (Findlay & Diamantopoulos, 2010).

Members of worker co-operatives are in the unique position in the business world of being both the employer and an employee. In order to navigate the legislation and at the same time build a strong co-operative that respects both members' rights and responsibilities, understanding the intricacies of the law can be beneficial. On a practical governance level, one study examined the relationship between worker co-ops, employment law, human rights legislation, occupational safety and workers' compensation (McNamara, 2009).

Four studies focused on ways to strengthen and expand the housing co-op sector. An Alberta based study examined the implications of leveraging new mortgages using the assets of other fully amortized housing co-operatives (Murray

& Pearson, 2008). The researchers found that the problem was not access to capital but the high cost of construction which makes new homes unaffordable without strong subsidies. Building on these findings, a team of graduate students took a different approach for opening up discussions on how to obtain commitments to finance new “green renovations” for Sunnyhill Housing Co-operative in Calgary. The students tested a hypothesis that engaging co-op members in the visioning process could provide the catalyst for a willingness to undertake these renovations and engage in sustainable housing construction practices (BALTA, 2009).

In another study, researchers investigated the options for non-profit organizations and housing co-op initiatives to adopt various practices for “financial sustainability” through finding ways to minimize costs and/or to generate innovative income options – such as through creation of a social enterprise (Svedova, Penfold, & Buczkowska, 2009).

In Saskatchewan an innovative housing co-op model has emerged that allows for home-ownership by low income families. Called the Neighbourhood Homeownership Program, the model also acts as a tool for inner city community development. Drawing on the experience of ten-years of implementation, researchers examined the strengths and limitations of this model – and other examples - to identify factors that promote or inhibit success (Gertler, Findlay, Spence, & Dimnik, 2009).

In a detailed review of social programs and policies in BC’s health and social services sector, Restakis and Filip (2008) examined the barriers and opportunities for social co-operatives in the province. They conclude that the limited understanding of the social dimension of service delivery and training are major challenges for the growth of social co-ops in BC. The report sets out recommendations for changes that would help address these barriers.

Child care co-operatives have been a prominent form of social co-op in several provinces in Canada. Leviten-Reid (2009) pursued a comparative analysis of child-care co-operatives to for-profit and non-profit centers examining parental involvement in operations and governance and overall quality of care.

### **Cooperating for Food Security and Fair Trade**

How co-operatives may contribute to food security and well being was a theme that drew attention from a number of social economy researchers across the country. Although there were over two dozen papers that focused on this sub-theme, seven were specific to co-operatives.

As in other parts of Canada, across the Prairies there is growing interest in the development of strong, vibrant, local food systems coupled with recognition of the importance of rural revitalization. Co-operatives have been an important component of the agricultural sector in the Prairies – both as traditional agricultural co-ops and now as new generation co-operatives. Three studies from this region examined the opportunities for farmer-driven, marketing co-ops to contribute to the growth and sustainability of the sector and that of their communities.

Aupers (2007a) investigated the opportunities for Social Economy Enterprises to contribute to the long-term, food security market. A case study was nested within this research focusing on one producer-driven, organic farming co-op – Farmer Direct Cooperative Ltd. In the study Aupers examines what can be learned from the marketing of the co-op's "eco-practices" (having "eco-acres" aimed at protecting wildlife habitat and promoting the use of biodiesel). These eco-practices were found to have favourable responses with consumers and helped in the marketing of the co-op's products for a high, fair market price.

In a second Prairie-based study, Gertler, Heit, and Rosher (2008) examined the potential options for organic producers to develop new processing and marketing co-ops. A study out of Manitoba supported members of Harvest Moon Society Marketing Co-op to further develop their ideas for a producer-driven, social enterprise committed to a triple-bottom line approach (McLachlan & Anderson, 2008).

The Really Local Harvest is a co-operative of small farmers in rural New Brunswick. In a business-centered study, researchers provided support for the farmers to investigate the merits of producing organic compost for sale in the region. A business case was developed but in the end the researchers found that given local conditions, this was not a financially feasible market for the co-op to enter (Chouinard, Courchesne, & Martin, 2009).

While a handful of studies explored the social economy and fair trade, only two were specific to the role of co-operatives. Both of these studies focused on Planet Bean Coffee Co-operative and their efforts to open a market for new fair trade products (Mukherjee, McMurtry, & Reed, n.d.).

## **Co-ops and Marginalized Populations**

A number of studies provided a snapshot of how the co-op model has been taken up in First Nations communities. This topic is explored in greater depth in the

chapter on “The Social Economy and Indigenous Peoples.” Here we briefly touch on highlights from a few of those studies.

Drawing on earlier work, Aupers (2007d) offers a brief overview of the development of First Nations co-operatives in Canada. The report refers to a 2001 survey that provided the first statistical picture of Aboriginal co-operatives in Canada. At that time there were 133 Aboriginal co-operatives across the country with the highest concentration being in Québec and the North (55% in total). Aupers concludes that one of the biggest hurdles to development of First Nation co-operatives is overcoming a government-backed business approach for addressing employment through individual entrepreneurship. This perspective ignores the “collective approach” inherent in First Nations’ communities and overlooks the compatibility of the co-operative model.

Also adopting a macro view on Aboriginal enterprise development, Hammond Ketilson, and Brown (2009), provide an analysis of the potential growth of fifty Aboriginal Financial Institutions to develop into full scale financial service providers – even credit unions. They identify challenges and opportunities to this future development.

Two studies examined the contribution of Aboriginal co-operatives to building local regional economies – one comes from northern Canada and one from the Maritimes. In the northern region, Alsop (2009) found that since the time of the formation of the first Arctic co-op in George River, Nunavik in 1959, a network of community co-operatives has grown up during a time of rapid changes. This network has provided an avenue for Inuit people to have a greater say over, and benefits from, economic development. In Repulse Bay, Nunavut, the co-operative is considered the “development engine” of the community and successfully combines elements of the informal, traditional economy with construction projects that require “commitment, engagement and cooperation.” Alsop attributes the ability of northern co-ops to adapt to changes in government and shifting economic conditions as an important factor in their continued success.

In the Mi’kmaq community of Paqtnkek in the Maritimes, McMillan and Prosper (2011) explored the potential contribution of an Aboriginal craft marketing co-operative for not only preserving traditional culture but protecting it against cultural exploitation while also improving economic self-sufficiency and the general social health of the community. A day long focus group brought together members of the community for a sharing circle on developing a craft co-op. Although obstacles were identified, factors for success were also highlighted.

In Saskatchewan, a new co-op was formed in 2007 following the organizational restructuring of the 40 year old Saskatchewan Trappers Association. The Association became a not-for-profit co-operative-the Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association Co-operative (NSTAC). While one benefit is the increased accountability and transparency of the new organization, this also represents a commitment to “taking charge of its destiny and becoming entrepreneurial and sustainable in order to bring enhanced opportunities to its membership” (Pattison & Findlay, 2010).

Two studies focused on how the co-op model can support the interests and needs of French-speaking Canadians living outside of Québec. One study from the northeastern, Acadian region of New Brunswick examined the contribution of co-ops to the two small island communities of Lamèque and Miscou (Chouinard et al., 2008). Here the Fishermen’s Cooperative Association, the Fisheries Cooperative Association Lamèque and the Caisse Populaire Islands formed the pillars for the growth of the social economy in the region. A second study, examined the potential impact of co-ops to enhance the lives of visible minority, French-speaking immigrants living in Ontario (Lafrenière et al., 2009). The study concludes that while there is interest in, and strong potential for co-operatives to provide social, cultural and economic services for this immigrant community, more support and leadership is needed from the existing Ontario Francophone co-operative sector.

One study focused on the potential for co-operatives to be an avenue for inclusion and empowerment for people with disabilities to better meet their economic and social needs. Soles (2009) examined the potential of forming a multi-stakeholder co-op for this purpose. Through a review of informal multi-stakeholder models, Soles identified four key factors for success: “consumer” control, building multi-stakeholder alliances, promotion of the social model of disability, and valuing economic inclusion and social solidarity.

## Co-ops and Policy Recommendations

While policy development was a prevalent theme in the social economy research, it has been examined in a separate chapter. Here we review several studies that dealt specifically with the implications of policy development related specifically to the co-op sector. At both the national and provincial level, these studies seek to create a better understanding of the policy environment that impacts the growth of the co-op sector in Canada.

In Mondragon, Spain; the Emilia Romagna region of Italy; and in Québec, the

growth of the co-op sector has flourished and continues to show signs of significant growth. One study examined what can be learned from the context, history, sector infrastructure, tax legislation and policy environments enabling the healthy growth of co-ops in these regions, and how this might apply to co-op development in Manitoba (Adeler, 2009). The study concludes that, not surprisingly, the growth of the sector is a direct reflection of the supportive environment that fosters development. In all three regions, government has a strong commitment to co-operative development as a business model to support regional economic growth; however, this is not as the lead stakeholder but as a support to leadership within the co-op sector. Alder sets out ten policy recommendations to support development of this enabling environment in Manitoba.

In a similar vein of asking what can be learned from the experience of co-op development in other regions and the interconnection with policy-frameworks, Guy and Heneberry (2009) compare the policy environments impacting co-ops in both Québec and Ontario. The study reports on government programs, legislation and regulations, as well as financing tools and other supports. A similar cross-border study examined policies affecting student co-operatives in the two provinces (Guy et al., 2009). This study also delves into the historical development of the movement, the current state of the student co-op movement in the two provinces and the potential areas for growth.

Taking a broader global perspective, Dobrohoczki (2009) examines how co-operatives may act as innovative spaces of resistance in the context of global free-trade agreements. In examining international trade agreements and conventions, as well as co-operative law and legislation, he argues that the positive socio-economic impact of co-operatives on communities provides grounds for promoting them as public policy instruments for sustaining local communities.

Following a somewhat similar line of reasoning, Hancock (2008) questions the economic development model proposed in the New Brunswick government's *2007 Action Plan for Self-Sufficiency*. Hancock argues that as community-based organizations, co-operatives can provide a bottom-up development model for how communities can provide needed goods and services and move toward greater self-sufficiency rather than be dependent on external markets and large-scale corporate investors. This report draws attention to the importance of supportive policy environments that encourage community-based solutions and small enterprise development to achieve long-term socio-economic sustainability.

## New Tools for Measuring the Co-operative Difference

An exciting area of development both for Co-operative Studies in the academy and for co-op development in the field is the creation of a number of new tools coming out of the social economy research projects. Development of these new tools demonstrates the benefits of community-university partnerships such that the work of academics not only has direct application but the focus of the work arises directly from the lived experiences – and challenges – of community organizations – in this case co-operatives. Similarly, co-operatives have the opportunity to work with academics who understand the co-operative difference and can work with them to strengthen organizational capacity and refine financial practices that draw out unique features of the model.

Tackling the on-going dilemma of how co-operatives have to fit a “one-size-fits-all” accounting framework (designed more for investor-owned businesses rather than social enterprises – especially co-operatives), the Centre of Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Co-operatives (CEARC, 2007) undertook development of a series of discussion papers to explore creating an international Statement of Recommended Practices (iSORP) for co-operative accounting. The project is intended to open up further dialogue and research around generating practical accounting tools for co-ops. The first few papers in the series identify the basic concerns, lay out a possible conceptual framework for co-operative accounting, and propose the objectives, scope, and purpose for the iSORP (CEARC, 2008).

One working paper in the series examines the benefits of reporting on co-op members’ total funds invested in the co-op on such financial statements as the balance sheet (Robb, Maddocks, & Hicks, 2008). Doing so can provide a clearer picture of the full extent and nature of all the members’ financial contributions; this includes: members’ shares, members’ preferred or investment shares, members’ loans, members’ deposits, reserves or retained earnings. Presently, members’ contributions may be reported as an asset or a liability; however, as part of the co-operative difference, being able to see the full extent of members’ financial contributions provides a different picture of the members’ “total equity buffer.” This could provide a very different view of the financial situation of the co-op.

A second paper examines the practice of reporting payments (such as patronage or dividends) to members (Maddocks et al., 2009). Again, thinking about the co-operative difference, a practice within co-ops that is not common in other

business models is returning surplus to members based on use (rather than number of shares) and setting limits on returns on investments. Distinguishing between payments to members and those to non-members can provide a different view of the co-op's financial situation and benefits.

Examining co-operatives as organizations that encourage and benefit from a high level of employee participation (especially worker co-ops), Novkovic, Stocki, and Hough (2009) consider the "total participation approach" as an appropriate fit for measuring the organizational effectiveness of co-operative enterprises. Drawing on earlier research that finds a relationship between ownership and motivation, productivity, and organizational efficiency, the researchers developed the "Co-op Index" as a diagnostic tool for measuring the degree to which key areas of performance are grounded in co-op values and principles. With this information, co-ops can refine their operational strategies in ways that strengthen the integration of values and principles based on high levels of member engagement.

Continuing with the theme of maximizing the benefits of the "co-operative difference," Brown and Hicks (2011) document the benefits of social reporting for strategic planning processes by co-operatives. Working with a recently formed second tier co-op (arising from the merger of a number of small consumer co-ops), the researchers adopted a "bottom-up" methodology and gathered data on the primary co-ops members' views of what they valued about their co-op. Using this data as indicators of the "co-operative difference" and how to measure it, the board of the newly formed, second tier co-op could then incorporate the member-owners' feedback into their strategic planning process. In a further report, Brown (2008) elaborates on the development of these score cards for social auditing and how they challenge the assumptions of the "bifurcation of the social and economic realms." Brown argues that this research demonstrates how the social mission for co-operatives – as well as other social economy organizations – is central to their unique advantage in the marketplace.

## Credit Unions

Although no one study focused specifically on mapping credit unions, the Atlantic Node, BALTA and Southern Ontario Node all included credit unions in their regional mapping of social economy organizations and/or co-operatives (financial and non-financial). (For example see: Thériault, Skibbens, & Brown, 2008; Sousa & Hamdon, 2010; Ontario Co-op Association, 2007).

Several studies focused on various forms of "infrastructure," including financial



capacity, available to support the growth of the social economy. Through the BALTA Node, an on-line data base of financing for social enterprises includes credit union financing (BALTA, n.d.). Similarly, Wuttunee, Rothney, and Gray (2008) undertook a scan of financial providers and programs in Saskatchewan and northwestern Ontario examining the role of government, credit unions, community-based options (such as other funding options within the co-op sector) and private funds.

In exploring the role CUs play (or might play) in financing social economy initiatives, Kristensen, Perry, and Markey (2009) undertook an exploratory study of the approach take by four credit unions, which varied by size, location (rural/urban), and reputation. The preliminary findings arising from key informant interviews suggest that CUs can be caught between the pull of competitive market forces with banks and the draw to stay close to their roots and social values. A further study by Perry and Markey (2009), explores the possibility that small, community-based credit unions may have a strong response to supporting social economy organizations as part of their competitive advantage in the local domain.

Haotao (2008) undertook an analysis of credit union microfinance programs in Canada.

## **One-of-a-Kind**

One paper under the theme of co-operatives focused on the topic of Mutuals in Canada (Dueck, 2008). One of the first tasks of this study was to define what is meant by the terms “mutual” and mutualism. Mutuals can take many different forms. This umbrella term may include: co-ops, societies, a trust, a corporation, or a contractual association of friends. In an effort to build a common foundation Dueck addresses the question: Do mutuals share common values and common goals? This paper identifies some of the challenges and limitations in building a common foundation.

## **Co-operative Movements**

Several studies examined some aspect of the co-operative movement in a particular region or province – in some cases the studies did not have a final report available at the time of this writing.

Alberta is one of the few provinces with a strong co-op presence in the power generation sector. One study out of Alberta reviewed the growth of the movement in the province with an eye to uncovering new insights around the establishment of

co-operatives in the natural resource sector dating back to the 1940s (Aupers, 2007c).

Comparing co-op growth and development in BC and Alberta, Restakis and Aasgard (n.d.) sought to identify factors influencing success of new co-ops. In BC, for example, on average 30 to 40 new co-ops are incorporated each year, whereas in Alberta the growth of new co-ops was very limited until the recent introduction of the CDI funding program through the Co-operatives Secretariat. How do public policies and sector development strategies influence the growth of new co-ops? What are their survival rates? What factors influence their success? These are a few of the questions explored in this study.

Following on the theme of factors influencing the growth of co-ops, Hardy's research (2009) focused on co-ops in the Yukon. Unlike other northern regions, co-operatives have not had a strong foothold in the Yukon. Since the mid-1960s, only 24 co-ops have registered in the Territory and only 4 have survived to today. Based on interviews and a review of the literature on factors influencing co-op development in other regions, Hardy examined the context for co-operative growth in the Yukon and sets out recommendations that may support future growth of the sector. Among these recommendations is the recognition of the need for a co-op advocate in the Territory and second, Hardy emphasizes the importance of a shift toward community economic development over an emphasis on attracting outside investors.

Turning the tables around, and following the intent of learning from regions demonstrating strong innovative growth in the Social Economy, BALTA researchers examined the factors influencing the innovative and successful growth of the co-op sector in Nova Scotia. Soots (2007) adopts a systems perspective in studying the Nova Scotia Co-operative Development System and examines the inter-relationship among an array of key social actors. The research concludes that key factors contributing to the growth of co-ops in NS include: entrepreneurial leadership in combination with well-designed financial tools, a supportive political environment and a strong history of co-operatives in the province. (see also a final report on exploring the application of the Nova Scotia Co-op system in B.C. and Alberta by the B.C. Co-operative Association and Alberta Community and Co-operative Association, 2009.)

### **Co-operative Education**

Two projects reviewed here focused on co-operative education. While the 5th International Co-operative Principle emphasizes the importance of co-op education

for members, boards and staff, little research has been undertaken to document to what extent co-ops embrace this principle and to identify what the challenges are in undertaking this work. With the support of the Ontario Co-op Association, Schugurensky, Badri, and Kronfli (n.d.) investigated the efforts made in co-op education within the sector for members, as well as broader education promoting the co-operative difference.

Shifting from educating co-op members and the public to educating professionals, the second study focused on developing curriculum material for a post-secondary course on managing co-ops (Freed-Lobchuk et al., 2011). Academics and community partners came together to help design a co-op management course for undergraduate students. Recognizing the importance of having qualified professionals who understand the co-op model, direct input from the co-op sector was an important component of the design. This was the first time in Canada that such a management course was offered to undergraduate business students.

## Summary and Looking Forward

This chapter summarizes a body of research that collectively makes an important contribution to advancing the field of Co-operative Studies in Canada. Completion of this research represents a significant increase in the availability of academic literature relevant to the inter-disciplinary field of Co-operative Studies. This work is also noteworthy in firmly locating Co-operative Studies within the broader field of the Social Economy – demonstrating common features and concerns while also illustrating unique traits of the co-op model. A third contribution of this collective work is that it highlights the direct application of Co-operative Studies to the real life issues relevant to both the growth of the sector and the daily challenges of small co-operatives.

Despite the rich array of topics covered in the studies summarized in this chapter, several important areas are omitted or receive only limited coverage. One such issue is the application of the co-operative model for alleviating poverty. This is surprising given recent emphasis within the sector on how co-ops can be a useful tool for addressing this social issue and indeed given that the movement grew out of the efforts of poor working class people coming together to improve their living standards. Another area that received only limited coverage was co-ops and the environment – the triple bottom line. We are addressing the first two dimensions rather well but are only beginning to bring the environment into our conceptual

frameworks and analysis of how co-ops can make a difference in the world. A third area that received little coverage is the significant role of credit unions within the co-op movement and the social economy. Primarily they have been studied here in a limited capacity as funders of other co-ops and not given their full due for the role they play in leading and shaping the social economy of Canada.

A theme that is echoed in many of the studies is the great oversight of government policies and programs for bypassing small enterprise development and community-based economic development solutions in favour of large scale, external investment-driven projects that perpetuate a pattern of dependence rather than self-sufficiency and self-determination. These studies document the extensive contributions of co-operatives to helping people in communities across the country come together to meet their common goals and create sustainable livelihoods. Through this collection of co-operative focused social economy research, the evidence is mounting of the substantial role co-operatives are playing, and can play, in creating vibrant local economies while improving social standards and respecting the environmental bottom-line.

## CHAPTER 4

# The Social Economy and Indigenous Peoples

Joy Emmanuel

### Introduction

This chapter not only describes aspects of the social economy documented through the lens of numerous research studies, but it presents a view of how colonization impacted the socio-economic culture of First Nations people from sea to sea to sea, and even beyond the boundaries of Turtle Island (North America). These studies also show the resiliency of Indigenous people in adapting to these external cultural forces. This collective body of research demonstrates how First Nations have used the tools of the social economy to meet their needs and reframe their experience—in their own terms—as they reclaim the right to determine their own destiny in the continual changing landscape of a “modern” world.

This chapter is dominated by a rich concentration of research on Indigenous peoples of northern Canada. Although the specific impacts of colonization and “development” certainly vary across the country, this concentration of northern studies provides a foundation from which we can better understand issues in Indigenous communities in other regions where the social economy research was sparser.

### Overview

We begin this chapter with a review of the research on mapping the social economy of northern Indigenous communities; followed by a cluster of studies that document the lasting significance of traditional ways of knowing framed through a social economy lens. A section on traditional food harvesting practices is followed by a brief exploration of ways First Nations communities are engaging in practices of sustainability in the changing environmental conditions of our times. An examination of the “mixed economy” is followed by a snapshot of the ways co-operatives have been used by First Nations to meet their social and economic needs. A section on urban Aboriginal issues provides a view to how some First Nations

entrepreneurs and business ventures are fairing in the modern economy. Using a social economy lens, several studies investigated issues of homelessness, racism and incarceration with a specific focus on Indigenous people. We close the chapter with a section which summarizes a number of studies that demonstrate the sense of the resiliency and strength within First Nations' communities as they carve out a future that embraces the values and principles important to them.

### Mapping

In the 2008 census of the northern region,<sup>10</sup> researchers identified 1,190 social economy organizations operating in the North based on this initial investigation. Of this population approximately one quarter (283) are First Nations or Inuit organizations. This breaks down into: 153 in the NWT, 40 in the Yukon, 36 in Labrador, 35 in Nunavut and 19 in Nunavik (Southcott et al., 2010, p. 10). Another 52 Aboriginal organizations may be included in this list once additional information has been gathered.

In the view of Southcott et al. (2010), the social economy in the North is shaped by Indigenous traditions blended into a "mixed economy," influenced by state interventions and natural resource development (p. 8). Drawing on the 2008 census, but focusing on the social economy in Nunavut, Southcott et al. argue that the social economy "empowers communities through building social capital and human capital capacity." The census revealed that 55% of board members in Nunavut are First Nations, Metis, or Inuit; whereas, when all of the territories are combined, the average is only 31% (p. 22). Adopting a community development approach, the researchers conducted a more detail survey of the social economy players in Nunavut which revealed their main challenges as retaining and training paid staff and addressing funding shortages due to decreased government funding. Strengths identified included: high levels of activity, strong collaboration within the sector and ease with recruiting volunteers, coupled with interest from the regional government to support social economy development.

Although development in the North takes different forms, Kennedy (2009) argues that "conventional southern models" of development impede innovation and inclusiveness. In examining northern development, Kennedy argues new approaches are needed that encourage an "engaged citizenry" rather than a "service recipients" model. Through an examination of the local, mixed economy of Igloolik

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<sup>10</sup> See: Southcott, C. & Walker, V. (2009). A portrait of the social economy in northern Canada. *Northern Review*, 30(Spring), pp. 13-36.

and a detailed case study of the Igloodik Early Intervention Project, aspects of a holistic approach to community economic development are highlighted and preliminary policy recommendations are set out. The proposed model incorporates: asset-based community development, identifying challenges, and uncovering community-based solutions for ways to support social economy organizations that in turn can encourage strong engagement of community members.

The Northern Galleria project offers another example of the innovative ways researchers sought to map the social economy players within Indigenous communities and to document their characteristics. Through the Galleria, MacPherson, and Alsop (2010), with the support of Arctic Co-operative Ltd., provide an on-line documentary database which tells the story of the historical development of northern co-operatives through pictures, stories, biographies of key individuals, and more. While a regional map provides an overview of where these co-ops are located throughout the North, the vignettes reveal a colourful cast of characters and the determination, strength and resourcefulness of the people who built these social economy organizations with meagre resources to meet their basic needs amidst times of great cultural shifts.

### Traditional Ways of Knowing

The studies in the northern region point to a common theme: to understand the social economy of the North you have to account for the importance of traditional practices and kinship ties. This theme is also echoed in many of the studies undertaken in other parts of Canada. In *Land, Environment and Life: Cree Social Economy*, Restoule, Gruner, and Metatawabin (2008) document a view of the Cree social economy (northern Ontario) across generational perspectives. They compare youth, adults, and elders in their relationship to the land and their views of social and economic well-being. Following in oral traditions of First Nations, the youth interviewed the elders to produce an audio documentary while canoeing together on a 14-day river trip. The traditional importance of the land and waterways is highlighted through story, wilderness sounds and visits to sites of significance along the way. It is anticipated that the findings will be used as part of the Fort Albany Land Use planning process. (For a second report coming out of this study see: Gruner & Broad, 2009, *Knowing traditional territory: An inter-generational dialogue.*)

Revisiting the popular American folk story of Hiawatha, which recounts the tale of the encounter of First Nations and Europeans, Corbiere, Francis, and Hele (2007) used an action research approach to engage the Anishinaabe First

Nations people of northern Ontario in a reinterpretation and re-enactment of this story at the Garden River Pow Wow. This project had such a strong impact on the community it inspired a further re-enactment of the signing of the Robinson-Huron Treaty of the 1860s.

### Traditional Food Harvesting and the Social Economy

Traditional food harvesting practices have been a cornerstone of Indigenous cultures providing not only sustenance but numerous physical, social and economic benefits. Despite major economic and social changes, Indigenous people in the North still harvest a considerable amount of their diet from traditional sources. As part of adapting to change in a way that respects cultural traditions, many Indigenous people have incorporated waged labour into their food production practices in ways that strengthen their economic base while maintaining important, cohesive social networks. The studies described below reveal how hunting and gathering traditional foods strengthens the links among households, provides many social benefits and forms the basis of the social economy in many northern communities.

In 2006, Natcher et al. in partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government, undertook a large scale survey of 665 Nunatsiavut households (representing a 79% response rate) to determine the harvest, use and distribution of “country foods” by Inuit people in several communities. Through this study they were able to document the extensive use and role of traditional foods and how Inuit families have incorporated wage earnings into an overall livelihood strategy. Continuing with this work, in 2010 Natcher “mapped” food harvesting and sharing networks among Nunatsiavut households showing the intricate link between subsistence, wage earnings, sharing and reciprocity as vital components of the Inuit social economy. Similarly, in the Innu community of Sheshatshui, Labrador, Castro, and Natcher (n.d.) documented the ways caribou hunting is still central to the diets of Innu people; forms a core, regenerative aspect for their collective life (both physically and culturally); and is foundational to the socio-economic fabric of their culture.

All that said, as many of the northern researchers noted, the past few decades have been times of significant change in Indigenous communities. In some communities, wage employment is replacing time spent in traditional food harvesting practices. This can translate into the availability of more resources (money) for the purchase of equipment that may improve in harvesting food from the land, or it may mean more food is bought at the store, or it can contribute to



greater food insecurity as traditional practices are lost and food in the grocery store is too expensive or not available. Chiu, Goddard, and Parlee (n.d.) examined the impact of wage employment on harvest participation, food consumption patterns and food security in two communities in the NWT and two in Nunavut. From food expenditure analysis and interviews, they found contradictory evidence that pointed to both a negative relationship between wage employment and harvest participation and, in some cases, a positive relationship between employment and consumption of traditional foods – reflecting increased access to resources. They also found that as country food harvesting declines, there can be an increase in food insecurity for both employed and unemployed households if food is not available at the store. They concluded that the relationship between food harvesting and employment is multifaceted and requires further study and on-going monitoring.

Todd (2010) pursued a similar study in the community of Paulatuk, NWT. Food prices in Paulatuk are the highest in the NWT and, at the same time, employment opportunities in the oil, gas and mining sectors are increasing. Whereas employment tends to mean increased access to foods in most parts of Canada, for many Inuit—as is the case in Paulatuk—wage employment can mean heightened levels of food insecurity as household members are not available to participate in traditional food harvesting practices to provide for core dietary needs. Todd notes that social economy players, such as family groups, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc., who work to improve food security, are an important part of strengthening the social infrastructure in remote northern communities such as Paulatuk.

In the community of Vuntut Gwitchin in the Yukon, a different food security challenge exists. Here, the traditional lands of the Vuntut people have been arbitrarily divided by the border separating Canada and the U.S. Jeans et al. (2010) found that Vuntut hunters have been detained at the border, they have had game confiscated and at times they have been labelled as smugglers. The researchers argue that locating issues of food security within the domain of the broader social economy is important to finding community-based solutions to health and nutrition.

We turn now to the research on Indigenous food harvesting traditions in other regions – within and beyond the boundaries of Canada. Research partnerships in the Atlantic social economy node extended from Mi'kmaq communities on Prince Edward Island to bridge across continents to the Williche people of Chiloe, Chile (see Institute of Island Studies, 2008). In both of these island cultures medicinal

seaweeds have been harvested for generations providing both sustenance and embodying spiritual teachings integral to their cultures. In both regions, however, these traditional foods are disappearing due, in part, to economic development that encourages high volume harvesting to sell seaweeds for industrial food manufacturing. As cultural traditions are eroded, cultural knowledge is also lost. One community development response has been the hosting of workshops to re-educate local populations about the nutritional and medicinal uses of seaweeds.

Many of the above studies also touch on policy implications for creating regulations around securing access to traditional foods and monitoring the impact of economic development which creates non-traditional forms of employment. Efforts to create effective policies must accommodate these “multifaceted” socio-economic relationships.

### **Sustainability, Indigenous Peoples and the Social Economy**

Following on the above discussion of challenges and opportunities for harvesting traditional foods, we turn now to two studies that illustrate how Indigenous peoples are working to create local, sustainable social economies in these times of increased environmental degradation and climate change.

The ability of First Nation communities to adjust to climate change is strongly linked to protecting the adaptive capacity of the land (McKnight & Gagnon, 2009, p. 3). Adopting a pro-active approach to climate change, Aboriginal leaders in the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Working Group of the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence Coalition on Sustainability are developing strategies to preserve and protect medicine plants. Through a series of community meetings, researchers met with medicine gatherers and community members in the Mik'maq communities of Uqigiganjig and Elsipogtog in northern New Brunswick to document their stories, concerns and hopes about how the communities will adapt to projected and observed climate changes while protecting traditional medicine plants. Two strategies emerged: the Aboriginal Heritage Garden and plans for increased protection of local habitat. The 2009 report presents a synopsis of these meetings/ partnerships and the strategies to support a vision for long-term sustainability of the communities.

In northern Canada, Sabin and Abele (2008) undertook an exploratory study to document development of the first subdivision in the eastern Arctic to be built using “sustainable planning and design principles.” Located in Iqaluit, Nunavut, “The Plateau” incorporates innovative environmental and social features that the authors

suggest could make it the new standard for sustainable development in the North. Through a series of stakeholder interviews, their work focuses on exploring the challenges and successes of the project from design to completion.

## The Mixed Economy

As noted in many of the above studies on harvesting of traditional foods, the topic of the “mixed economy” is a common theme in research undertaken in northern Indigenous communities. This is not surprising as the mixed economy represents one of the significant changes in the lives of First Nations people in the North, it is also one of the ways that households have adapted and are coping with the changes, and it is a significant characteristic of, and influence on, the social economy in the North. In this section we explore further the contours and impacts of the mixed economy and how it shapes the social economy in Indigenous communities.

The social economy forms the necessary foundation for a bottom-up approach to community economic development in the North (Southcott et al., 2010; Natcher, 2010; Kennedy, 2009). Bernauer (2011) affirms this view in his study of the social economy in Baker Lake, Nunavut:

The most prominent ‘institution’ in the local social economy of Baker Lake is the mixed economy — household reliance upon combination of harvesting, household clothing and tool production, and money from a variety of sources including government transfers, simple commodity production, and wage labour. (p. 8)

Bernauer goes on to argue that there is both a complimentary and contradictory relationship between various aspects of the social economy. For example, while some small scale mining activities can occur in a way that supports a balance between these two poles, other industrial mega-projects, such as the proposed Kiggavik uranium mine, can have a significant negative impact. Through interviews, fieldwork, and a review of various documents, Bernauer examines the dichotomy between small-scale and mega-project development and how they impact local, “mixed,” social economies.

In their study, *Monitoring Persistence and Change in the Social Economy of Déline, NWT*, Simmons and Gordon (n.d.) define the mixed economy as: “the dual objectives of capitalist economic development and maintenance of community well-being and sustainability through the traditional economy.” While the social economy

of *Déline* has been sustained by some form of mixed economy recent developments threaten this balance. This study focuses on the role of traditional practices as indicators of a healthy social economy and reveals how language, culture and connection to the land are keys to culturally appropriate community economic development. Simmons and Gordon argue that as the Dene return to a state of self-governance and resource management it is important that the principles of a traditional way of life are maintained.

Another face of the social economy that researchers examined is what community development means when dealing with the creation of tourism ventures in First Nations' traditional territory. Bennett and Lemelin (2009) examined the community's response and the potential impact of a national park on the eastern arm of Great Slave Lake, homeland of the Lutsël K'è, Dene First Nation, NWT. The researchers document community perspectives to determine the community capacity building required to maximize benefits while minimizing negative impacts. The findings emphasized the importance of having a united community vision for the park and a long-term commitment to community development.

Land Claims Organizations (LCO) also play a significant role in shaping the social economy of the North. LCOs have been set up to protect the rights of Indigenous people to access traditional territory, to advocate for self-governance, and to negotiate benefits from development of natural resources within their boundaries. To date, little research has been done on their role. Rodon and Tulugak (n.d.) present case studies of two LCOs – one in Nunavut and the other in Nunavik. They examined policies and investment strategies to measure the effectiveness of LCOs in providing tools for strengthening the positive impacts of development.

## Developments of Aboriginal Co-operatives

Drawing on earlier studies of Aboriginal co-operatives,<sup>11</sup> Aupers (2007d) summarizes key findings in these reports to provide an overview of the development of Aboriginal co-ops in Canada. The report touches on: the historical roots of First Nations co-operatives across Canada; the development of co-management agreements around access to, and benefits from, natural resources; the evolution of definitions of aboriginal co-ops and evidence-based decision making;

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<sup>11</sup> Belhadji, B. (2001). *Socio-economic profile of Aboriginal co-operatives in Canada*. Co-operatives Secretariat. Government of Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.coop.gc.ca/pub/pdf/abore.pdf>; Hammond Ketilson, L. & McPherson, I. (2001). *A report on Aboriginal co-operatives in Canada: Current situation and potential for growth*. Retrieved from <http://www.coopcanada.coop/pdf/GAP/aboriginal/MainReport.pdf>; Elias, P.D. (1995). *Northern Aboriginal Communities economies and development*. Captus Press Inc.

and Aboriginal co-ops by sector. The latest statistical data of 2001 indicates there were 133 co-ops in Canada that had a predominately Aboriginal membership. Together co-ops in Québec and the North made up 55% (73) of these co-ops.

The co-op movement took root in northern Canada in the late 1950s, as a “child of the expansion of the post-war welfare state” (Alsop, 2009, p. 3). As a model for economic development, community co-operatives provided an alternative to mining and megaprojects. A network of community co-operatives grew up across the North and played an important role in meeting the needs of Inuit people as they went through a period of rapid and dramatic change. Through this time the co-op sector grew and established deep roots, resulting in the establishment of a second tier co-op: Arctic Co-operatives Ltd. – a federation of Arctic co-operatives. Alsop examines the historical role that co-operatives played in the development of the social economy in the North and illustrates the current challenges and opportunities facing community co-operatives through a detailed examination of Nauyas Co-op, Repulse Bay, Nunavut.

While artisan marketing co-operatives were significant to community development across the Arctic, they have also been important in other parts of Canada. Below the findings of two studies illustrate the potential benefits of the model for contributing to local Indigenous, social economies.

Within traditional Mi’kmaq territories, in what is now Atlantic Canada, social economy partnerships were created for exploring the potential of a marketing co-operative for First Nation craft producers and artisans from across the region. A day-long seminar was held using a “Made with Mi’kmaq Hands” sharing circle process to explore visions, concerns, and interest in forming the co-operative. In addition to consulting with the Paqtnekek community, the project team gathered data on the skills and assets present in the community, reviewed the community’s history of craft production, and gathered additional information on the state of the local social economy. As was echoed in other social economy studies in Aboriginal communities, researchers found:

[The] social economy in Mi’kmaq country is embedded in Mi’kmaq customary concepts and practices related to kinship, apprenticeship, knowledge translation and mobilization and the exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty rights. For example, Netukulimk is a natural resource concept that guides the relationship the Mi’kmaq have with their natural environment. This concept is a guiding principle that informs sustainable interaction that fosters

well being from the land, sea and air. ... Netukulimk represents, in part, a culturally aligned value system that guides Mi'kmaq social economy activity. (McMillan & Prosper, 2011, p. 35)

Community economic development that respects cultural traditions, values, and history is key to supporting the community in gaining a greater degree of self-sufficiency while avoiding cultural exploitation. Creation of a “Made with Mi'kmaq Hands” craft co-operative is one way to move toward this desired outcome.

Moving from visioning to practice, the study of Ohpahow Wawesecikiwak Arts Marketing Co-operative Limited of Big River First Nation in Saskatchewan by Findlay, Bear, and Pattison (2008), documents ways this co-op is contributing to building community capacity and generating income for members while integrating traditional values and world views.

### Urban Aboriginal Peoples and the Social Economy

The studies reviewed in this section provide several perspectives on the development of social economy approaches to support First Nations people living in “southern” Canadian urban centers. While the particular circumstances on-the-ground vary from northern Indigenous peoples, the challenges of financing economic development while respecting traditional community values remain constant. These studies highlight the role of government in shaping social economy development strategies, the internal momentum and leadership of First Nations organizations, and the potential contribution of the credit union model for advancing bottom-up development opportunities.

Following from the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) and related reports, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) was developed as an integral part of the overall approach of the Federal government for raising the standard of living of urban Aboriginal people across the country. Eight UAS pilot projects were set up. The end date for the initial UAS pilot in Saskatoon was 2007. In an evaluation study, Spence and Findlay (2007) reviewed the administrative structures of this program to determine if the mandate of implementing innovative approaches for meeting the needs of Aboriginal people living in urban centers was met. Drawing on results of a survey, focus groups and interviews, they found that while the first steps had been taken toward capacity building and strategic planning, further work could be done to improve administrative practices. They set out ten recommendations for improving effectiveness in addressing the needs of urban Aboriginal people. One such recommendation was the adoption of a Sustainable Collaborative

Community Model to enhance effectiveness by increasing community engagement in prioritizing community needs while building partnerships with non-aboriginal and government players.

A second study to further support the work of the Saskatoon UAS was to create a funding database to better facilitate implementation of innovative projects (Lynch, Spence, & Findlay, 2007). Following further with the Sustainable Collaborative Community Model, a funding and granting “table” was set up to bring various partners together – each partner at the table (whether government, funder, community organization, private sector player or other) offers some asset that brings knowledge, credibility, or other resources to the project. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy Database is one such contribution and an example of the fruits of these partnerships.

Following on this theme was a study documenting the development of a National Network for Urban Aboriginal Economic Development (Sy, Waboose, & Rice, 2009). The Network set up Learning Circles across the country as a way of sharing knowledge and effective practices for community economic development supporting First Nations people. The researchers followed the growth of one such Learning Circle in Sault Ste. Marie with the intent of documenting effective development strategies and contributing to policies that enable the success of these community efforts.

In another study out of northern Ontario, social economy researchers Broad et al. (2010) partnered with the Employment Unit of the North Shore Tribal Council to conduct a labour market study of employment readiness and training needs of members of five participating First Nations. The study identified both employment barriers and community strengths for addressing these obstacles.

Across the country fifty Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) play an active role in providing development loans for business initiatives in First Nations Communities. While these organizations have played an important role in supporting Aboriginal entrepreneurs in moving forward with many business ventures, overall the network is in decline and some AFIs struggle to maintain their capital base. A 2009 study by Hammond Ketilson and Brown explored the factors that are motivating AFIs to look at new financing models—such as credit unions—and the hurdles and opportunities for making such an institutional shift.

## Social Issues and the Social Economy

Two social economy studies focused on the issue of homelessness in northern communities. Homelessness is a widespread social concern in Canada and not unique to Aboriginal communities; however, a study by Abele, Falvo, and Haché<sup>12</sup> found the majority of visibly homeless persons in Yellowknife are Dene, Metis, or Inuit. Further to this, Falvo reports that the rate of homelessness is estimated as being five times higher in Yellowknife than in other Canadian municipalities (Falvo, 2011, p. 6). In Yellowknife, Falvo examined the challenges and conditions of response programs (such as emergency shelters), as well as government funding programs. The study lays out policy recommendations for addressing gaps in the system. A second study by Abele, Falvo, and Thomas (n.d.) examined the role of affordable housing in poverty reduction strategies in the Yukon.

The subject of social capital and the solidarity economy was examined in a 2010 study by Meades and Broad. They explored the role of social capital building in a cross-race, anti-racism committee in Sioux Lookout, northern Ontario. The committee was intent on efforts to build relationship across different cultures within the community. Their study documents an example of building respectful race relationships within the social economy through an in-depth look at one such program.

From Saskatchewan comes the only study to specifically focus on Métis people. Kapachee Training Centre is a community-oriented educational center setup in the late 1970s by Métis leaders concerned that their people were not achieving their potential in the school system. The intent of the center was to “return control of the educational, economic, and other destinies to the people of Fort Qu’Appelle and the surrounding area.” Over the years the Center has continued to expand and adapt its programs. In their study of the social economy in rural Saskatchewan, Anuik and Williamson (n.d.) focus on one of the programs the center offers called Little Tots. Emphasizing the needs of the whole child, this program serves primarily Aboriginal youth ages 3-6 to support development of high self-esteem and other social skills as part of school readiness.

Following a similar thread, Salokangas (2009) investigates the meaning of education today for Inuvialuit people in Tuktoyaktuk, NWT, from a First Nations’ perspective. She found that the meaning of education was and continues to be

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<sup>12</sup> Abele, F., Falvo, N. & Haché, A. (2010). Homeless in the homeland: A growing problem for Indigenous people in Canada’s North. *Parity November* 23(9). Cited in Falvo, 2011.



“acquiring the means to support a family.” However, what that meant in the 1930s differed from what that meant in the 1970s and differs from what that means today. Contemporary views grounded in “being whatever I want” have been coupled with low-levels of youth education. The study makes policy recommendations for families, schools, and communities on ways to increase student engagement.

Focusing on traditional and modern responses to reintegration of Aboriginal people after incarceration, Findlay and Lanceley (2009) examined the services and supports in place in south western Saskatchewan. Identifying multiple needs of First Nations ex-offenders and serious gaps in the services, the study highlights the importance of shelter and safety as the starting points for returning from incarceration. The study critiques the status quo approach to program delivery as the findings of a cross-Canada and international scan reveal best practice approaches which point to the benefit of supporting and working directly with transitioning individuals.

In her 2010 study, Findley extends this focus of inquiry by examining lessons learned in sending convicted First Nations people with disabilities and convicted Aboriginal youth offenders awaiting trial to spend time in the wilderness on a trap line. The findings will be used for developing programs specific to northern Aboriginal people.

## Preparing for Change

Offering a critical analysis of the state of Indigenous-Settler relations in Canada, Atleo (n.d.) addresses the rise of what he describes as neo-liberalism within the Indigenous Nationhood. Atleo warns of shifts that take First Nations people further away from their traditional culture and values. He cautions Aboriginal leaders not to lose sight of their Indigenous roots in favour of neo-liberal economic options and draws attention to the social economy as a value-based, people-centered approach to development that may be more compatible with First Nations traditions. “As the neoliberal policies of big business invade more and more territory, and more and more people are adversely affected, we see a rise in movements like the Social Economy. Alternatives to neo-liberalism exist because Indigenous peoples have lived them” (p. 30). He encourages grounding governance in Indigenous principles and worldviews.

Touching on some of the concerns that Atleo raises, Kennedy & Abele (n.d.) compare economic models for development in the North (see also Kennedy, 2009). Although the Inuit territory of Nunavut is now self-governing, they argue that

the dominant economic-development model is still based on “southern (Euro-Canadian) market oriented principles” that do not account for the traditional cultural values and ways of the Indigenous populations of the region. Kennedy notes that “underdevelopment is characterized as the lack of physical and financial assets; and poverty in this case is narrowly defined as the lack of financial (earned) income” (2009, p. 3). By this model, poverty is defined as a lack of employment rather than as a result of an act of social exclusion. Focusing on the community of Igloodik and a community history based on a review of existing socio-economic statistical and historical data, the research provides an empirical-base for reframing regional economic development as “under-development” which has multiple social and economic consequences. From this perspective, a new set of questions, definitions, and possible solutions arise for addressing poverty, low literacy levels, high unemployment and other social issues that plague northern communities when conventional (Euro-Canadian) approaches are prioritized.

From eastern Manitoba and northern Ontario, another social economy study brings forward similar points of contention around development models endorsed by provincial and federal governments that conflict with the traditional ways of life of the Anishnaabek people. Researchers studied the impact of newly created year-round roads coming into formerly remote communities. Through comparisons of the views of elders, youth, and First Nations governments in three communities presently with, and some without, all-weather roads, Wuttunee (2010) develops a set of quality of life indicators to measure the impact of accessibility arising from these new highway developments. These comparisons provide data for a critical evaluation of how existing government policies impact cultural continuity and long-term social wellbeing in remote Anishinaabe communities in the world’s largest contiguous tract of un-roaded boreal forest.

Social economy, community-university research partnerships can extend into the solidarity economy and connect issues in the global North with similar issues faced by communities in the global South. Below we examine three studies that are part of the solidarity social economy. The results of this work clearly show that while the specifics on the ground are different, the impacts of colonization are a major factor in shaping the social economy in Indigenous communities North and South.

In the following two studies we again visit the Isle of Chiloé, Chile. The Institute of Island Studies of PEI partnered with the Williche Council of Chiefs and Bosque Modelo (Model Forest) of Chiloé Island. Fish and marine plants have been an integral part of the traditional foods and culture of the Williche people. They

refer to the ocean as the Heart of Mother Earth; however, rapid industrial growth, particularly focused on harvesting marine resources, is now threatening not only their traditional way of life and their livelihood but the marine ecosystems as well. Vazquez and Novaczek (2010) examined the changing relationship of Williche youth with the sea as their future shifts from being traditional marine harvesters to workers in marine industries. This study is a first step in developing community strategies for responding to these changes and opening up the possibility of another option for Williche youth – that of marine ecosystem management – helping to preserve and protect the ocean’s wildlife for future generations.

A second study on Chiloé by D’Ambrogi and Novaczek (2009) examined the socio-economic and cultural context of the Williche people and explored the potential for microenterprise to be a tool for empowerment and inclusion. The study examined the marginalization of the Williche Indigenous people within a system that defines “disadvantage” as access to economic development and “success” in terms limited to economic status. Despite challenges to business development the researchers found Chiloé microenterprise entrepreneurs defined success for themselves in ways that went beyond monetary matters and viewed empowerment as using resources in the environment and applying their skills to create a living. From this way of framing quality of life, the microenterprise entrepreneurs felt high levels of satisfaction, confidence and empowerment through their work.

A report titled, *Recovery of the Collective Memory and Projection into the Future*, documents the process of an evolving collaboration between social economy researchers at Algoma University College and partners from the Association for the Holistic Development of Rural and Urban Communities (ASOPRICOR) in Colombia, South America (Reyes, Valero, & Broad, 2006). This partnership began with the “linking” of the two organizations when one of ASOPRICOR’s members enrolled in programs at Algoma College about the same time that the CSERPs began. This “research” is as much about building respectful relations as it is about the intent for the research coming out of the partnership. The report describes both the process of “learning” about one another (values, motivation, guiding principles and what that means in their relationship) and the outcome of that partnership (documenting vital knowledge that can be passed on from one generation on the front lines of a life and death struggle to future generations; documenting the challenges so that ASOPRICOR can take an evidence-based approach when representing their concerns, and reporting on the social transformation that is occurring). The research partnership is “leveraging” new knowledge and tools for the community partner to work with while also “leveraging” access to the deep

roots of community knowledge and experience that can enrich and direct the academic process of knowledge creation for social change.

### Summary and Looking Forward

As noted at the beginning of this chapter the concentration of studies coming out of the North provides a rich foundation for understanding not only the conditions, challenges and opportunities of the social economy in northern Indigenous communities but in other regions as well. Research from Atlantic Canada and the Northern Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan Node further fills out the picture of the state of the social economy in Indigenous communities in the southern regions of Canada. BALTA and the Southern Ontario Node had very few studies on Indigenous issues. There were no reports from Québec on Indigenous peoples and the social economy, this is surprising given the strength of the social economy in that province and the 2001 co-op statistics indicating Québec had the highest number of Aboriginal co-operatives in the country.

Drawing on the substantial body of research coming out of the work of the Northern Node, we find four themes run through the social economy research from this region: 1) communities in the North have gone through a period of dramatic change in the last several decades; 2) government policies and approaches to development are based on status quo models that impede community empowerment through prioritizing economic dependence on external parties; 3) new approaches to community development that support the growth of the social economy sector could provide innovative, yet culturally appropriate, models for moving forward; and 4) an important starting place for this shift is to assess conditions on the ground by addressing such questions as: What are the needs and concerns of the community? Who are the social economy players? What is their current status? What are the challenges and opportunities before them?

While the social economy research on Indigenous communities in the southern regions of Canada is patchy by comparison to the North, we can still see that certain themes run through this work as well. First, there is an emphasis on the importance of maintaining the roots of First Nations culture and values when introducing community economic development models. Second, there are indications that the social economy – centered in values of mutuality and empowerment in meeting community identified needs – can offer culturally respectful models and tools for self-determination. Indeed it is encouraging to find in this body of literature so many examples of participatory action research and community-university partnering that have contributed to the direct application

of social economy research in addressing concerns of Indigenous communities and supporting their visions for the future.



# CHAPTER 5

## Organizational Governance and Capacity

Matthew Thompson

### Introduction

The strength of the social economy is intrinsically connected to the strength of the organizations operating within the sector. While many external factors exist that may impede or enable the realization of an organization's mission, the internal structure and functions of an organization are pivotal in overcoming the external obstacles and harnessing the external opportunities.

### Overview

Well over 70 projects within the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP) explored themes of governance and capacity as it pertains to social economy organizations.

In this chapter we will summarize some of the major findings of these projects, exploring the different forms that social economy organizations take and the different ways in which they operationalize their mission. While capacity is clearly inextricably linked to finance, this chapter will focus on the internal workings of social economy organizations rather than looking at the external financial environment that is supporting the growth of the sector in Canada. This does not provide a complete picture of governance or capacity building within Canada's social economy organizations but does develop a snapshot of the major findings coming out of the CSERP research. Some of the existing research gaps in this field of knowledge were identified within some of the research projects and have been included here.

### Organizational Governance

There are a number of facets to how an organization is governed. An organization's incorporation type will provide the framework for how it will operate, but there is substantial play within that framework to shape member and

community engagement, the role of the Board of Directors, the strategic planning and decision making processes, and the approach to social and financial accounting to meet the particular needs of the organization.

What is considered good governance can vary between organizations and between cultures. However, some standard tools for increasing accountability through better governance are:

- self-regulation mechanisms such as a code of ethics
  - governing boards that consist of people external to the organization but work on behalf of their members to ensure that the goals of the organization are being met
  - methods for communicating with stakeholders outside the organization, including annual reports, newsletters, project evaluations, and financial reports
  - methods to include the participation of the diverse stakeholders in the planning and evaluation of projects in which the organization is involved.
- (Pattison & Findlay, 2010, p. 6)

## Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is largely confined to the parameters set within provincial incorporation legislation. While incorporation is not mandatory the benefits involved prompt many organizations to seek incorporation provincially or, when appropriate, federally. The prominent incorporation structures within the social economy that were explored through the CSERP projects were co-operatives and non-profit organizations. Social enterprises were also covered in great detail, but currently there is no incorporation form for social enterprises in Canada, necessitating incorporation as a non-profit, co-operative, or, occasionally, for-profit corporation (one of the projects through the Atlantic node actually set out to develop curriculum for the Business and the Law undergraduate course at Saint Mary's University that would guide students on how to choose an appropriate incorporation form for social enterprise development).<sup>13</sup> This has created issues for social enterprise in Canada as will be explored further in this section as well as the previous chapter on social enterprise.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic/English/SN5E.asp#Project%205.8>



### ***Becoming a Co-operative***

Co-operatives were a dominant incorporation form investigated by CSERP projects. One of the papers that really explored the incorporation process and the effects of incorporation law on co-operatives is, *Self-Determination in Action: The Entrepreneurship of the Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association Co-operative*. This paper provides a unique glimpse at an unincorporated association's decision to incorporate as a non-profit co-operative. In the case of the Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association Co-operative, their move to become a legal entity helped to solidify their accountability and transparency in the eyes of government funders but also helped to reaffirm their commitment to self-management and to becoming enterprising and financially secure.

A legal requirement of incorporation entails “an elaboration of the governance, legal rights and responsibilities of the organization before they are granted a charter.” Once incorporated, a number of benefits accrue to the organization. First, by being a legal entity, the organization can enter into contracts with partners and can borrow money. Second, the legal framework can ensure that the ownership and control lie with the members (if incorporated as a co-operative). Third, the incorporated body is recognized as legitimate within the legal system and is a sign that the country (or province) accepts that there is a need for such an association. Fourth, the members are not liable for debts incurred by the organization. Without legal status, individual members can be held responsible. (Pattison & Findlay, 2010, p. 4)

But developing a co-operative can also be intensely challenging. Novaczek, Pobjoy, and Gallant (2010), explored the failure of Launching Entrepreneurial Advantages for Parents (LEAP), a co-operative developed by low-income mothers in rural PEI designed to create training opportunities for themselves and the community at large. The dominant challenges identified by the women were finding childcare, affording childcare, and the overall health and wellbeing of their children. These challenges linked back to the stability and frequency of the work available to them. The authors note that these same challenges proved to be barriers in the establishment of the co-operative. When the group was capable of hiring a full-time staff member it proved to be a major asset in the continued development of LEAP. However, the mothers needed additional support to make the venture truly work, but adequate and appropriate programs or government policies were not available to alleviate the marginalization of the women. A further barrier in the establishment

of LEAP was the absence of charitable status for the co-operative. This was evident in the Microsoft Foundation's rationale for declining the organization's application. After four years of work on the LEAP project the members decided to pull the plug. The authors conclude that "[t]he fact that they finally had no option but to abandon their Co-op reflects badly on Canadian government policies and programs, especially those governing rural community development and those related to early childhood education and care" (p. 16).

### ***Becoming a Non-profit***

The act of incorporating as a non-profit, or as a charity for that matter, was not covered in detail by the CSERP projects. However, Elson and Gouldsbrough (2009) do explore proposed changes to incorporation legislation for non-profits in Ontario and Québec. The authors highlight the non-profit sectors' responses to the suite of suggested amendments in both provinces. The existing legislations, as well as the proposed changes, impose measures on how non-profits are organized and what kinds of operations are acceptable. A recent report by CIRIEC-Canada, cited by Elson and Gouldsbrough, suggests that some of these measures are particularly prohibitive to smaller non-profits. The authors also explore non-profit legislation in Saskatchewan, where two different non-profit incorporation types exist: charitable and membership.

The overall impression of incorporation as a co-operative or non-profit is that while there are some definite benefits to incorporation, the actual process of incorporating an organization and the ensuing limitations on organization and operation can be extremely detrimental for organizations developed from the grassroots and/or by those already experiencing substantial employment barriers.

### **Membership and Engagement**

Membership can take on a number of different forms within social economy organizations. Formal membership is a legal requirement for both non-profits and co-operatives, but the membership structures and the opportunities for member engagement can vary between organizations. Membership tends to be similar in non-profit co-operatives as in non-profit organizations. Members are expected to pay fees, engage in elections and other important votes at annual general meetings, and generally seek active engagement where possible in the activities of the organization.

The similarities end there, however, when looking at the worker co-operative

model, “businesses that are owned and democratically controlled by the worker/employee members” (Hough, Wilson, & Corcoran, 2010, p. 5). Members within a worker co-operative are inherently more deeply involved and invested in the operations of the organization than members of non-profit organizations, whose participation may be limited to strictly paying membership fees. In fact, worker members may even own shares in the business, therefore becoming a member/owner. “The co-op’s assets are collectively owned and surplus earnings are allocated to the workers according to the bylaws and policies established by the co-op (i.e., the membership), often in proportion to hours worked by members and with limited return on shares and member loans” (Hough, Wilson, & Corcoran, 2010, p. 5).

While the principle of ‘one member, one vote’ holds true for both co-operatives and non-profits, the democratic action of members, much like the representative democracy found throughout Canada, is usually limited to the election of a board of directors who set out the policies that govern the operation of the organization.

### ***Boards of Directors***

One of the defining features of non-profit and co-operative organizations is governance by a board of directors instead of stakeholder boards, in the instance of publicly traded for-profit corporations. Non-profit and co-operative organizations are required by law to be “governed by a volunteer board of directors, most of whom receive no compensation for their duties” (Lasby & Ventry, 2008, p. 1). Often organizations will “use their by-laws to empower the board of directors to act as the employer and exercise the rights of the employer. (McNamara, 2009, p. 33)

As a result, often the most active part of any social economy organization’s membership is the board of directors, which is typically elected by the broader membership although sometimes there may be appointed positions. A board’s demographic and mandate will vary depending on the mission, location, size, and stage of development of the social economy organization. Elson and Rogers (2009) provide a detailed example of board structure in their analysis of the Chantier de l’économie sociale.

The Chantier, a large network of networks in Québec largely seen to be the main representative of the social economy in the province, has thirty-five board member positions, of which kr are appointed. To ensure a diverse representation on their board they have mandated representation from 9 electoral colleges, or

networks of activity within the province that correspond to the social economy (e.g., trade unions, co-operative networks, etc.). “Representatives to the board of directors are elected or appointed by their respective networks, not by the Chantier membership as a whole” (Elson & Rogers, 2009, p. 13). The Chantier’s board plays a strategic planning role as opposed to an operational planning role.

The Board is mandated by the Chantier constitution to convene as often as necessary, but a minimum two times per year. Meetings of the board of directors are called by either the secretary or the president, or, upon written request of at least two directors. The board of directors annually elects eight representatives from the board of directors to the Executive Committee; at least five of the fourteen directors are chosen from networks of social economy enterprises and development organizations. The ninth member of the Executive Committee is the President and CEO of the Chantier who has non-voting status. The Executive Committee addresses operational issues and policy tactics once the board has established strategic policy priorities. The board of directors may propose policy changes which are then taken to the annual General Assembly of members for approval. Only board members nominate and elect officers of the association but members of the Chantier may propose and vote on amendments to the Chantier by-laws. (Elson & Rogers, 2009, p. 14).

Soots (2007) in her research report on Nova Scotia’s system of co-operative development also explored in depth the organizational structure of the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council (NSCC). The board of the NSCC is much smaller than the Chantier’s with 12 directors “representing co-operatives and credit unions across the regions. In addition two (2) Ex-Officio seats are held on the board by representatives of the provincial government” (p. 10). Having board representation from partner organizations and government departments can be highly strategic for social economy organizations. As Kliewer (2010) notes in her report on community-based planning, it is important to consider who you want to have around the table “and look for collaborative leaders (business and otherwise) who have connections to these different sectors” (p. 45).

Hough, Wilson, and Corcoran (2010) drew on their personal experiences with worker co-operatives in Canada, as well as surveys, interviews and other engagement activities, to identify factors that determine success within the sector. They found that “[b]ecause the membership, through the board of directors it elects, develops the policies that determine the co-operative’s daily and long-term

operations, it follows that trust, communication and co-operation among members are vital to the co-op's success" (p. 5). While the same may be true within non-profits, membership tends to be less integrally engaged in the operations of the organization and hence less focused on operations and more focused on governance. Kistruck (2006) investigated the role of non-profit boards in influencing the focus and outcomes of an organization. He identified two overarching board functions: monitoring and resource procurement. Through official data that he collected he used structural equation modeling and multivariate latent curve modeling methods to determine what effect these two roles had on the ability of organizations to achieve objectives. Perhaps surprisingly, he found that the monitoring role that boards play has the most impact on the performance. While the ability of a board to draw in donated resources (some of which may in fact originate from board members) was seen as positively improving financial performance they found a negative correlation between an increase in board size and financial performance (pp. 12-13).

### ***Employees***

The ways in which employees are engaged within an organization can have a profound impact on the quality of their performance and the overall performance of the organization, particularly in the form of motivation and different organizational structures. Novkovic, Stocki, and Hough (2009) sought to explore the unique participative role of employees found within co-operative organizations. In their review of relevant literature they found that the motivations to build greater worker participation within a given organization "range from humanistic (personal growth and satisfaction of employees), to power-sharing (redistribution of social power), and organizational efficiency (predominant concern in the economics and business literature)" (p. 3). Worker engagement can be measured in 4 main areas of participation: whether the workers are also owners, how much control workers share, the array of issues in which they have a voice, and how many avenues within the organization they have to exercise that voice.

Interestingly, the research results suggest that an increase in workers rights to financial returns has only a limited impact on the increased productivity of employees. However, the authors discovered that "increased control (and therefore, autonomy) will likely have a positive effect on organizational productivity, if participation is meaningful and individually rewarding, i.e., the benefit of participation to an individual employee is greater than its cost" (p. 5). Further,

when these two types of worker rights are combined they are seen to significantly enhance the potential for greater productivity.

Maddocks, Novkovic, and Smith (2009), engaged in a partnership project to evaluate the general performance of an independent private school that is democratically managed by teachers and parents. Teachers in the school wield a unique influence on curriculum when compared to other educational institutions in the public school system, and teachers that participated in the research noted that this was a benefit to working at the school. While the teachers did also admit to feeling overworked, in literature on organizational stress, “increased job control is predictive of reduced stress and negative stress outcomes” (p. 17). The risk of potential burn out, nonetheless, is a legitimate concern and should be monitored within all organizations with high levels of employee participation.

### ***Community Roots of Social Economy Organizations***

In her research on citizen participation and governance in community initiatives on mental health, Duperré (2010) illustrates that all organizations within the social economy have their roots in social movements. Not only have many practitioners in the sector cut their teeth through involvement in social movements but many organizations have also sprung out of citizen-based committees formed through a commitment by government to address the concerns voiced in those movements. Duperré argues that we need to remember that community engagement is not a new phenomenon and that the current social economy is merely a new configuration for the social movements of yesterday. Citizenship, she proposes, is about being engaged in public decision-making beyond exercising the right to vote; it is about active and voluntary participation in changing the living conditions of marginalized communities and helping to influence policy and social programs to the benefit of these communities.

Social economy organizations are anchored in this idea of citizenship, and so it is important that the organizational structures in the sector are designed and redesigned to allow the full participation of people from marginalized groups. Duperré points out, however, that social economy organizations are often challenged in this regard as staff and board members tend to be middle to upper class, well-educated, and used to using technical language that serves to further alienate those they seek to serve. She identified different structures within social economy organizations where community members are likely to be involved. These include: Administration (hiring staff, attend board meetings as a member or

non-member, participate in decision making), Activities (participate in educational and political activities), Training (participate in training staff), Information (develop and communicate information), Services (be a paid employee, volunteer), and Evaluation (quality of services, staff performance reviews, reviewing complaints).

## **Social Accounting and Evaluation**

Exponents of the social economy argue “that organizations can have both social and economic priorities, conceptualized as interlocked and mutually reinforcing of the organization’s identity, mission, and performance” (Brown, 2008, p. 1). Increasing the legitimacy of the social economy requires an ongoing commitment by organizations to develop effective methods of social accounting (other similar terms also exist such as social reporting, accountability reports, social audits, etc.). While financial reporting has many tried and tested models, the mechanisms and processes needed to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of an organization’s social mission are still very nascent in Canada. Many innovative examples, however, do exist and can provide the basis for the development of other effective models. The experience of co-operatives, in particular, has great potential in teaching other social economy organizations about effective social accounting practices.

### ***Evaluating Co-operatives***

Leslie Brown of Mount Saint Vincent University explored just this potential, reviewing four co-operatives (three credit unions and one worker co-operative) who showed a commitment to social reporting and had completed at least two reports that were available online. She focused on three key indicators for measuring the ‘co-operative difference’: stakeholder engagement, how the reports translated into long term planning and decision-making, and how entrenched the social accounting processes are within the organizations.

Unsurprisingly, the methods and degree of stakeholder engagement varied across the four organizations. Engagement activities could include determining a focus and/or indicators for social accounting, contributing relevant data, or just generally providing feedback, input or questions through an open invitation. The social reports were generally seen to provide action agendas and suggestions for improvement. The utility of the reports in terms of stimulating action is directly linked to the clarity and precision of the reports. (Brown, 2008, p. 15)

Some nationally or globally accepted standards of social accounting were identified to be part of the approach used by the four case studies. These include the

AccountAbility 1000 Accountability and Assurance standards, the Global Reporting Initiative's (GRI) Sustainability and Reporting Guidelines, the Ceres reporting requirements, and the Canadian Public Accountability Statements. The federal government has also been influential in encouraging social accounting by requiring federally regulated banks to submit Public Accountability Statements and by, more recently, advocating the development of corporate social responsibility and stakeholder engagement through Industry Canada. (Brown, 2008, p. 2)

Social reporting has **instrumental value** in that it can contribute to organizational efficiency and tracks performance in relation to goals, targets, and objectives. It helps with risk management – anticipating problems and fixing or mitigating them before they occur. Social reporting also has **expressive value** in that it is rooted in the nature of social economy organizations, organizations characterized by value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand, and which explicitly value their social purposes. (Brown, 2008, p. 3)

### *Evaluating an Independent School*

In Maddocks, Novkovic, and Smith's (2009) project they evaluated the general performance of the independent private school based on existing research they used a balanced accountability model, a balanced scorecard. The scorecard featured four key indicators "1) student learning; 2) opportunity to learn; 3) responsiveness to students, parents, and community; and 4) organizational capacity for improvement" (p. 12). They emphasized that evaluation of not just student learning but also that of the teachers was essential to increased accountability to stakeholders, along with assessing general overall opportunities for learning for both groups, the impact of the school environment, ability to respond to the concerns of stakeholders, and the efficacy of organizational capacity. All throughout this assessment, they note, stakeholders should be engaged in providing both objective and subjective input.

### **Organizational Capacity**

The capacity of a social economy organization can be understood as the balance it strikes between the obstacles to its operation(s) and development and the ways in which it overcomes those obstacles to actualize its mission. In the face of acute social, economic, and/or environmental upheaval capacity can be understood as resilience. Gliedt, Parker, and Lynes (2009) identify the following factors influencing the resiliency of social economy organizations: "Stocks and flows



of human and social capital, relationships, resource mobilization, information, competence, economic development” (p. 1).

Funding and entrepreneurship clearly plays a pivotal role in an organization’s capacity to actualize its mission; please refer to the chapter on Financing the Social Economy for more information on this subject. Similarly, public policy is hugely impactful on the capacity of social economy organizations. For more information on public policy initiatives and recommendations please refer to the chapter on “Enabling and Enforcing the Social Economy through Public Policy.” Some of the areas of organizational capacity explored within the CSERP research projects include volunteers, education and skills development, and networking and movement building.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers are often cited as a crucial component to an organization’s capacity. Because many non-profit organizations struggle financially, volunteer support can help fill gaps in staffing. In a 2007 census of the Ontario co-operative sector, the value of volunteers was indisputable. “49,000 individuals volunteer their time in the day-to-day operations of co-operatives or as members of the organizations’ boards of directors” (Lasby & Ventry, 2008, p. 1).

But despite the obvious payoffs of recruiting volunteers, it can also end up being a drain on organizational resources. The Ontario co-operative census reveals that “more than half of the province’s co-operatives hold mentoring sessions and orientation workshops to provide their volunteers and board members with professional development” (Lasby & Ventry, 2008, p. 1).

Another growing trend in volunteerism is employer-supported volunteering (ESV). Meinhard, Handy, and Greenspan (2009) conducted a survey and eight key informant interviews with 11 financial institutions operating an ESV program. They found the programs to be very similar, offering “either credits for volunteering (in the form of a \$250-\$1500 donation to the non-profit where the employee volunteers) or in-house projects reflecting either employee initiatives or company-wide philanthropic planning” (p. 2). It seems that the programs are effective at engaging employees in volunteering with 92% of respondents stating that they only volunteer in company-initiated project, and 42% stating they had never engaged in volunteering before participating in the program. However, frequency of volunteering seems to be low with 74% of respondents stating they volunteer only occasionally. It is also unclear if the volunteer support in these cases has helped

increase the capacity of the participating non-profit organizations.

Similar to these kinds of programs are mandatory community service programs. Padanyi, Baetz, Brown, and Henderson (2009) did a study of the inclusion of such a program in Ontario's public school curriculum. They found that the Ontario program was not as well structured as other programs they investigated. Additionally, they found "there is little support for the idea that forcing high school students to volunteer pays off in subsequent community service down the road. Students who probably would not have volunteered in high school if they were not required to (the students for whom this high school program was most intended) were no more likely to volunteer later in life than those who did no volunteering in high school" (p. 3). Further study into appropriate and effective initiatives to stimulate volunteering could help strengthen existing programs.

### Education and Skills Development

The ability of staff and volunteers to meet the capacity needs of a social economy organization is highly dependent on their education and skills set, and their access to ongoing training and professional development to build upon those competencies. Often the blending of social and economic missions (and increasingly environmental missions) can increase the number and magnitude of capacity challenges workers face. In the case of social enterprises and co-operatives whose main social mission is the employment of its workers, often individuals who are overcoming or who have permanent barriers to employment and therefore need additional support from management and staff.

For example, Broad and Saunders (2008) explored challenges and opportunities facing social enterprises that employ recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program. These workplaces have adapted governance structures, management styles, appropriate positions, and other supports to accommodate the needs of their employees.

This research demonstrates that persons experiencing intellectual disabilities, for example, require ongoing, repetitive training and that any workplace innovation will require intensive training, job coaching and support. Likewise, the research demonstrates that dealing with episodic disabilities such as psychiatric illnesses, requires employers who have an in-depth understanding of the nature of the disability, and the varying needs of the employees as a result. At the same time, they have used business knowledge and

expertise, often provided by volunteers or staff recruited for that purpose. (Broad & Saunders, 2008, p. 10)

One way that the social enterprises were seen to have met these enhanced demands for employee support was through strong relationship development with social services and other non-profits and businesses that intersect with the social and financial bottom lines of the organization.

### ***Research Development***

One of the key capacity building tools used is research. By engaging in research organizations are able to strengthen their understanding of the world around them, the impact of their work on target communities, and what models exist elsewhere that they might be able to adopt within their own operations.

Reyes, Valero, and Broad (2006), in their research work with the Columbian Association for the Holistic Development of Rural and Urban Communities (ASOPRICOR) identify Participatory Action Research as an important method in community-based projects. “Concretely, the concept is to create space for people to identify what type of development people have and what they want to change, through a continuous process of self-reflection, of change, of improvement” (p. 21). This approach to research is seen as an effective method in developing leadership capacity.

The BC-Alberta node of CSERP (BALTA) engaged in a thorough analysis of how the research centre might continue following the completion of the 5-year funding period through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. This study may prove to be useful to the other CSERP nodes as well as other community-university research partnerships in terms of sustainability planning, ensuring that research partnerships between community and educational institutions are ongoing.

### **Networks and Partnerships to Build Capacity**

Quite often the challenges that face social economy organizations can seem much larger than the organizations themselves. Whether its finding adequate physical infrastructure, finding the time and space to learn from other organizations and across different fields and sectors of work, engaging in research activities, or trying to raise one’s voice above the din to influence public policy development, it can quite often be a daunting experience. But many organizations are finding

increased capacity on these fronts by partnering with other organizations both within and outside of the social economy.

### **Partnerships**

Gliedt, Parker, and Lynes (2009) explored how environmental service organizations are developing partnerships to improve resiliency in the face of diminishing funding opportunities. They identified two forms of partnerships that support entrepreneurial innovation for environmental service organizations (which may also be extended to other social economy based organizations). *Stability Partnerships* “mobilize human and social capital to ‘release creativity’ and generate ‘incremental and inconspicuous’ innovations” (p. 2). In the case of environmental service organizations stability partnerships are largely indirect relationships with the federal government, facilitated by the Green Communities Canada network. Crisis Partnerships, as the name suggests, are born out of times of unexpected emergency. These types of partnerships “provide flexible and timely support, and facilitate community entrepreneurship” (p. 2). They often also include collective decision making processes (e.g., between government bodies and public utilities) and, much like other forms of partnerships, concentrate on meeting several objectives simultaneously.

### **Clustering**

Social economy organizations have historically shown resilience in the face of infrastructure and resource challenges through co-location. Sharing space and other resources with other organizations can help significantly decrease core expenses. But there are further advantages of co-location. In their paper, *Beyond Co-location – Clustering in the Social Economy*, Soots, Sousa, and Roseland (2009) explain how the clustering of non-profits has emerged as a collective organizational model to provide necessary physical infrastructure and resources as well as to facilitate co-operation, collaboration and network building within the sector. Sometimes referred to as multi-tenant non-profit centres, non-profit shared spaces or co-location facilities, incidences of these clustering organizations are springing up all over North America and Europe. Beyond co-location and the provision of physical space, these non-profit cluster models are intended to facilitate strategic collaboration and alliance building amongst organizations within the social economy. (p. 4)

The authors identify three key shared features to these ‘collective

organizational models.’ They tend to be multiple tenancy organizations comprised of non-profits and social enterprises. The tenants are physically located in one building or several closely situated buildings. Finally, the mission of the centres tends to focus on charging affordable rent and providing secure space, helping to improve organizational capacity, and generally support the missions of the tenants.

As part of their report, Soots, Sousa, and Roseland (2009) have included profiles on clustering centres in Canada (8) and the United States (5), as well as a prominent centre in the United Kingdom. They observed during their search for relevant centres to profile that most centres are based in urban locales and that these urban-based centres are engaged in actively involving the broader community to help raise the profiles of their tenants. They also observed that these urban clustering centres are often connected to the preservation and restoration of heritage buildings and local communities – an area identified as ripe for further research. The centres had varied approaches to creating opportunities for collaboration and the cross-pollination of ideas, in some cases formalized approaches with dedicated staff were in place, in other cases shared spaces are provided to allow for informal connections to be made. The authors suggest that a study of which approaches are most effective in stimulating partnership development and social innovation would be beneficial to the sector. Soots, Sousa, and Roseland (2009) also note that some recent examples of clustering include multi-sector tenancy, illustrating “the increasingly blurred sectoral boundaries associated with the current realities of social change” (pp. 39-40). This will be an area of development worth tracking in understanding the potential benefits and challenges of cross-sector clustering.

## **Networks**

While clustering centres meet the needs of social economy organizations to be locally connected to foster greater creativity and collaboration, networks and associations have been historically important in helping to foster these sorts of opportunities at regional, provincial, and national levels.

Building on the strength of co-operative and democratic models within the sector, social economy based networks in Canada build membership bases to help surmount capacity barriers faced by smaller organizations and to create new opportunities. These networks aim to raise the profile of the sector through collective action to create opportunities in research development, public policy forums, and information brokering.

Downing and Charron (2010), in their scan of different governance models to building the social economy movement, identify 4 typologies of environments conducive to networking and movement building: Formal and Structured, Informal Coalition, Emerging Coordinating Spaces, and Fragmented. An example of the formal and structured network is the Chantier de l'économie sociale. They note that "Québec is the only jurisdiction within Canada where a formal, democratic and inclusive structure (the Chantier) has been created to unify the [social economy] in a single structure promoting a framework for the role of the [social economy] as a major contributor to socio-economic development" (Downing & Charron, 2010, p. 35). As for informal coalitions, Downing and Charron promote the success of the Canadian CED Network in Manitoba as an example. Roundtables and councils, particularly those found in Ontario and Atlantic Canada, are examples of emerging coordinating spaces. But in many areas of Canada the social economy continues to be fragmented "without a unifying structure or common agenda for social and economic development" (p. 36).

Downing and Charron suggest that further work needs to be done to bring the social economy together under one movement. They suggest that an area for further research would be an examination of "how a more formal unified structure, a Roundtable for example, can be created for the [social economy] in Canada as a whole, not dependent on federal government support that may fluctuate with changes in political leadership" (p. 38). An important role for existing networks and strong social economy organizations in building this movement will be to support the development of bridging organizations in regions where no entity currently exists.

An example of the impact networks can have may be found in Wheatley, Burge, and Fitzpatrick's (2008) study of community engagement practices supporting the development of domestic fair trade food products. Through interviews with various organizations engaged in domestic fair trade initiatives the authors discovered that many organizations were working collaboratively with other organizations. Through networks, organizations have found opportunities for greater participation in all areas of the food chain and for developing the capacity of the sector to engage in food security related research, programming, and teaching. Organizational capacity is also enhanced to deal with "producing supply, certification, distribution, transportation, cost negotiation, and marketing. A cooperative organization approaches these challenges by committing to share the market, advocate for fair prices to all farmers in the cooperative, work cooperatively to meet supply demands, and meet as a cooperative in the off-season." (Wheatley, Burge, & Fitzpatrick, 2008, p. 4).

## Summary and Looking Forward

The ability of the social economy movement to expand and become more impactful depends upon the strength of the organizations within the social economy. The research explored in this chapter helps to illustrate some of the ways in which organizations are strengthened, or alternatively weakened, through the governance mechanisms and capacity development measures put in place within social economy organizations. Some of the areas of potential growth and ongoing challenge for the sector noted by the CSERP authors include the formalization of social enterprise as an organizational structure either as a standalone incorporation model or integrated into existing non-profit and charity legislation, finding simple and economical means for organizations to engage in social accounting and evaluation, and creating further capacity for organizations to come together to collaborate and build momentum for the sector.





# CHAPTER 6

## Financing the Social Economy

Matthew Thompson

### Introduction

Within the non-profit sector in Canada, financing of organizations and their activities has traditionally been through government and foundation grants, charitable fundraising and donations, and, occasionally, loans. With the emergence of the social economy, financing has since grown to include more private market strategies such as revenue generation and “investment products that fall somewhere between the two extremes of pure financial returns and pure social returns” (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 8).

One of the defining features of the social economy is this balance between economic and social objectives, and because of the focus on the latter the financial institutions that have and continue to be supportive of private sector development tend to see social economy organizations as being risky investments. This has required the sector and its supporters to analyze what the real risks are and dispel any misconceptions while at the same time developing new financial tools and strategies that are adaptive to the actual financial needs and challenges.

These tools and strategies constitute what is called ‘social finance’ and are “distinct from others forms of financing in that [their] intention is to support organizations in developing a social impact, as well as financial ones” (Karaphillis, Asimakos, & Moore, 2010, p. 11). Social finance is a burgeoning area for financiers of all stripes in Canada and is integral to the advancement of the social economy. For this reason, there is much interest in learning about effective social finance models both within Canada and internationally that can be replicated and scaled up to achieve greater impact.

It is important to note that the aforementioned contention surrounding the definition and use of the term social economy also affects the financial environment surrounding the sector. Social finance as a term may be inclusive of financing non-

market related activities or may apply strictly to the financing of those activities that combine clear financial and social bottom lines. In some of the CSERP literature, social finance has been applied exclusively to the financing of social enterprise, another term open to debate. Additionally, there are other terms in use that may or may not be interchangeable with the term social finance. Pearson and Lawrence (2009), for example, identify the “Nonprofit Sector Capital Market” (p. 6) as that which straddles the philanthropic market, which prioritizes social outcomes, and the traditional capital market, with its financial bottom line.

The purpose of this chapter is not to make an argument for the usage of a particular definition or term. Instead this chapter will purely look at what the CSERP literature has to say about the finance environment surrounding and supporting the social economy.

## Overview

Over 30 projects within the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP) explored finance as it pertains to the social economy. The bulk of the relevant research focussed on the various ways in which the social economy is funded, while some projects also highlighted the ways in which social economy organizations manage their finances and the types of financial institutions that exist within the social economy.

In this chapter we will summarize some of the major findings of these projects, exploring the various tools and mechanisms of social finance, the accounting practices of social economy organizations, and the innovative organizations within the social economy that are financing development. This does not provide a complete picture of finance within Canada’s social economy but does develop a snapshot of the major findings coming out of the CSERP research. Some of the existing research gaps in this field of knowledge were identified within some of the research projects and have been included here.

## Tools and Mechanisms for Financing the Social Economy

The tools and mechanisms for financing the social economy have been evolving alongside the development of the sector. While financing options continue to be more focused on traditional non-profit funding models (e.g., government and foundation grants, fundraising, fees and occasional loans), innovations have been emerging to bridge these options with traditional private sector financing to address the relatively new needs posed by an ever increasingly entrepreneurial non-profit

sector. Jed Emerson describes this finance space between the non-profit sector and the private sector as blended value and has developed a continuum of financing to illustrate this (this diagram can be found in Pearson and Lawrence's (2009) paper on the present 'Nonprofit Sector Capital Market' in British Columbia and Alberta).

This continuum demonstrates how there is a need for different financial solutions within and across sectors. As Pearson and Lawrence (2009) point out

Just like for-profit business ventures, nonprofits and social enterprises require different types of financing at different stages of development, as well as other specialized types of support, *to move from start-up to sustainability*. A typical development path for a nonprofit or social enterprise could involve the following types of financing: seed capital (usually in the form of grants) to formulate an idea and conduct feasibility analyses, start up funding (usually grants, but could include equity equivalents) to begin operations, primary financing (grants or fee-for-service revenue) to roll out their first programs, secondary financing (grants, fee-for-service revenue, or specialized debt products) to expand program offerings, mezzanine financing (grants, fee-for-service revenue, or specialized debt products) to go to scale, and finally, the "Holy Grail": reaching the mainstream, where the organization has sufficient cash flow, reputation, and history that it can attract regular, conventional bank financing such as senior debt, lines of credit, and more. (p. 8)

Similarly, Wuttunee, Chicilo, Rothney, and Gray (2008), in their paper on social enterprise financing in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Northwest Ontario, share the Vancity Community Foundation diagram charting the types of funding (equity, debt, equity equivalent, grants, internally generated revenue) required by social enterprises according to the stage of their development (e.g., seeding, start-up, survival, growth, maturity).

## Equity & Equity Equivalents

Equity, quasi-equity, and equity equivalents are instruments of venture capital, usually used to seed or start-up a business. Within the social economy they are typically only an option for organizations that are able to issue shares. In Canada, non-profit organizations, because of incorporation legislation, are not able to sell shares and are therefore not able to use equity to attract investment or secure loans. (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 10) As a result, "[t]he sector has to resort to

dual organizational structures to be able to generate revenue and operate social enterprises in a sustainable manner” (Karaphillis, Asimakos, & Moore, 2010, p. 18). The other alternative is for innovation by financial institutions to create quasi-equity or equity equivalents that do not come into contravention with non-profit legislation.

Elson, Gouldsbrough, and Jones (2009) in their comparative study of social economy financial instruments in Québec and Ontario reveal that Québec has developed a variety of equity, quasi-equity, and equity equivalent investment options for the Social Economy while they “identified no instances in Ontario where patient capital or quasi-equity shares were involved, although discussions in this direction are certainly underway” (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 15). As the authors highlight, the development of these financial instruments has sprung both out of sector need and the presence of political will.

The Fiducie du Chantier de l'économie sociale was the first of such developments in Québec, created to help reduce investor risk and cultivate capital through “an innovative long term financial product, a quasi-equity hybrid form that falls somewhere between venture capital and traditional financing, a patient loan with a 15-year capital repayment moratorium” (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 22).

Patient (or growth) capital is an equity equivalent and has proven to be a critical new financial adaptation for social enterprise development. “Sources of patient capital include friends and family (love money), developmental lenders, (i.e., Community Futures Development Corporations), Social Venture Capitalists and private ‘Angel’ investors” (Wuttunee, Chicilo, Rothney, & Gray, 2008, p. 3). The rate of return on these types of investment tends to be lower than most other forms of equity investment. Investors are also committed to helping the enterprise from development through to financial sustainability. This kind of quasi-equity is scarce in most areas of Canada and many within the sector are interested in seeing this area of finance expand in geography and capacity.

The following are some of the existing examples of funds and financial organizations providing equity, quasi-equity, and/or equity equivalent investments and loans to social economy organizations, as are explored within the CSERP projects:

## Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's Community Economic Development Investment Funds (CEDIFs) are an innovative approach to providing equity. CEDIFs use RRSPs to invest in social economy organizations, providing a 35% tax credit to the investor. However, Karaphillis, Asimakos, and Moore (2010) point out that "[c]onsidering the risk-averse nature of RRSP investments, this route would be best used by mature SEOs" (p. 22).

## Québec

The CSERP research on financial instruments identified a range of equity financing within Québec, from state owned to sector run services. Some of the providers of equity and equity equivalents include:

- Fonds d'intervention économique régional provides equity and quasi-equity during the start-up, development, and succession stages. Co-operative enterprises in all regions of Québec are eligible, as well as business corporations with limited or general partnerships. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, pp. 34-35)
- Capital régional et coopératif Desjardins provides quasi-equity. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, pp. 26-27)
- The Fiducie de l'économie sociale "is a \$52.8 million patient or quasi-equity fund enabling collective enterprises to embark on long-term planning and invest in real estate." (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 30)
- Fonds de Solidarité along with the Fédération québécoise des municipalités (FQM) created a financial institution that "provides primarily equity loans for start-up, purchase of equipment and/or consolidation of small businesses, including social economy enterprises." (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 25) This type of locally-managed financial institution is called a SOLIDE (Société locale d'investissement dans le développement de l'emploi).
- FilAction provides equity type loans and guarantees to support co-operative start-up and contributes equity regionally to micro-credit funds. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, pp. 29-30)
- Réseau d'investissement social du Québec (RISQ), a \$10.3 million venture capital fund, makes equity investments, often towards technical assistance. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 29)

- Réseau québécois du crédit communautaire is a member-based fund that provides access to equity between \$5,000 (for loan circles) and \$20,000 (for community-based organizations/initiatives). (Elson, Gouldsborough, & Jones, 2009, p. 28)

### ***Ontario***

Community Futures Development Corporations in Ontario have been an important player in financing the social economy, typically using loans but also using equity for their character-based lending. (Elson, Gouldsborough, & Jones, 2009, p. 51)

Social Capital Partners focus primarily on financing social enterprise and use equity as one of the tools to achieve this (Elson, Gouldsborough, & Jones, 2009, p. 40), as well as near-equity in the form of subordinated debt. (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 38)

### ***Manitoba***

In Manitoba, one of the leading provincial funders of social enterprise is the Jubilee Fund, which has developed an “Equity Investment Framework’, which includes a provision for ‘flow-through equity donations.” (Wuttunee, Chicilo, Rothney, & Gray, 2008, p. 18)

### ***British Columbia***

The Venture Capital Programs in BC has some applicability to the social economy, providing venture capital in the beginning stages of business development (for-profit social enterprise or co-operative). Investors in the equity programs who hold shares for at least 5 years are eligible for a 30% tax credit. Included in the program are tax credits for ownership by employees. (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 32)

### ***National***

The Canadian Alternative Investment Cooperative, itself a social economy organization, provides secured and unsecured equity to non-profits, social enterprises, and co-operatives under their ‘Social Enterprise Funding.’ (Elson, Gouldsborough, & Jones, 2009, p. 45)

## ***International***

One of the important ways in which the United Kingdom has stimulated the development of social enterprise, known as Community Investment Corporations, has been through the creation of Community Development Venture Capital Funds (CDVCs), finance tools that were originally developed in the United States. “CDVCs are for-profit businesses that leverage external investments (from institutional investors, foundations, government, etc.) and make equity investments in businesses that operate in low-income neighbourhoods” (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 49). The first CDVC in the UK, Bridges Ventures, was developed in 2002 originally from a mixture of private and public funds, but is now completely funded privately.

In France, one of the requisites for a worker co-operative (*Société coopérative et participative*, or SCOP) to acquire official status is to contribute .42% of revenues towards the broader SCOP movement. This contribution is distributed to federations and various financial and technical assistance tools. One of the main financial institutions delivering some of these tools since 1965 is the *Société coopérative de développement et d'entraide* (SOCODEN), which among other things, provides equity loans and financing for working capital requirements. Other financing sources provide loan guarantees, venture capital and investment funds for participatory shares, which enjoy priority on earnings (Corcoran & Wilson, 2010, p. 27).

## **Loans and Micro-financing**

Loans are marginally more accessible to social economy organizations than equity, quasi-equity, and equity equivalents. The reality, however, is that there are many internal and external barriers to social economy organizations seeking debt financing. In Karaphillis, Asimakos, and Moore's (2010) examination of the results of an Atlantic Canada survey on lending and investing services provided by various financial institutions and government agencies to support the development of the social economy, they found that

Lending officers of banks and credit unions overwhelmingly indicated that repayment capacity, security/collateral, credit history, management experience, and quality of the business plan are the most important factors considered in assessing loan applications in general. The survey also indicated that low profitability, lack of security and personal equity, reliance

on grants, low financial expertise, and incomplete business plans were often encountered in loan applications from social enterprises. (p. 17)

While practices may vary across Canada, it is unlikely that these criteria are widely different in other provinces or territories. Many non-profits, co-operatives, and social enterprises would find it difficult to pass through these qualifying measures with high marks. Social economy organizations are limited by how they can back loans. The balancing of a double or triple bottom line often results in lower profitability for social economy businesses – making it difficult to repay debts and increasing the reliance on grants. Additionally, they have no or limited equity, no or limited credit history, limited capital against which to secure a loan, and don't often have a lot of experience in developing strong business plans.

Karaphillis, Asimakos, and Moore (2010) discovered that of the Atlantic social economy organizations (SEOs) surveyed, “42 percent of SEOs have experienced rejection on their financing requests” (p. 12). While this overwhelming rejection rate seems to be largely a result of internal challenges to the sector, criticism also exists of the financial sector's willingness to adapt new criteria and funding instruments to support the burgeoning social economy. For example, “twenty four percent of SEOs mentioned they were unsuccessful in obtaining financing because financial institutions ‘do not finance social enterprises’” (Karaphillis, Asimakos, & Moore, 2010, p. 19).

In other provinces, these needed financial adaptations have been emerging. The Réseau d'investissement social du Québec (RISQ), for example, is a social economy venture capital pool worth \$10 million that helps social enterprises and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with start up loans, loan guarantees, and credit margin guarantees. Similarly, Community Business Development Corporations, Community Futures Development Corporations, Community Economic Development Corporations and Aboriginal Capital Corporations, based in regions across Canada, have been providing small loans to some social enterprises and businesses with clear community benefit. These loans are usually accompanied with higher interest rates than other loans, however, to accommodate the heightened risk (Wuttunee, Rothney, & Gray, 2008, p. 13). Karaphillis, Asimakos, and Moore (2010), note that there continues to be a lack of access to larger loans, over \$100,000 (p. 20).

One of the barriers to debt financing for social economy organizations is the absence of a loan guarantee program for social enterprises, akin to the Canada



Small Business Financing Program, which provides loan guarantees for SMEs, or other similar provincial programs. These programs help to minimize the risk associated with start-ups and SMEs (Wuttunee, Rothney, & Gray, 2008, p. 13).

“Studies indicate that the federal loan guarantee program has resulted in substantial total and incremental job creation in the mainstream economy and will most probably have a similar, if not larger, effect in the Social Economy” (Karaphillis, Asimakos, & Moore, 2010, p. 20).

Here are some of the existing examples of funds and financial organizations providing debt financing to social economy organizations, as are explored within the CSERP projects.

### ***New Brunswick***

The Saint John Community Loan Fund is a micro-credit organization and currently the only community loan fund in Atlantic Canada. Its mission is to “to improve social conditions for people living in Saint John by promoting economic independence and fostering entrepreneurship in our community” (Peters, 2010, p. 11). The Fund recruits investments to build its loan pool and then re-lends this money in the form of business loans, employment loans, or shelter loans, to individuals living on low-income.

### ***Québec***

Québec again displayed the widest range of loan programs within the CSERP documentation. The following are some of the loan programs available to social economy organizations in Québec:

- Caisse d'économie solidaire Desjardins, established in 1971 and for a long time the principal funder of the social economy in Québec, is an important solidarity finance actor within Québec, providing individual and enterprise loans to co-operatives and non-profit organizations. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 28)
- The Réseau québécois du crédit communautaire provides community loans (up to \$20,000), manages loan circles (up to \$5,000) for partner organizations, and supplies unguaranteed loans that are based on the principles of microfinance. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 28)

- The Réseau d'investissement social du Québec was actually developed by the private sector as a non-profit-managed venture capital fund. RISQ provides loans and loan guarantees for social enterprises. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 29)
- Les Fonds local d'investissement are local investment funds targeted towards both traditional business and social enterprises. They provide loans, participatory loans, loan guarantees, bonds or other debt securities. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 33)
- Investissement Québec is a governmentally operated using a myriad financing tools, including loans, loan guarantees for collective entrepreneurship, capitalization loans, and preferred shares for social enterprise capitalization. These types of loan options are generally provided to companies, co-operative businesses and non-profit organizations. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 34)
- Caisse d'économie solidaire Desjardins has been a mechanism of solidarity finance, offering loans and loan guarantees since 1971. Through its loan program the credit union has been supporting the development of the social economy in Québec. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 28)
- La financière du Québec was developed in 2001 by Investissement Québec, with \$15 million set aside for financing non-profit organizations. Through their 'Program for the Promotion of Collective Entrepreneurship' they provide loan guarantees, which in 2007-2008 alone totaled \$20.6 million. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 34)

### **Ontario**

Some of the loan sources for the social economy in Ontario include:

- Social Capital Partners (SCP) is a unique Ontario-based financier of social enterprise and franchises. One of their pivotal innovations has been the creation of 'socially adjusted interest rates' whereby companies that show a commitment to hiring people with barriers to employment will receive lower interest rates on loans received from SCP. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 40-41)
- ACCESS Community Capital Fund (ACCF) has been meeting the micro-financing needs of small and medium sized enterprises in the Greater Toronto Area since 1999. They focus their loans on individuals

and partners who have had start-up capital applications declined from other sources. ACCF does not directly issue loans (this is done by Alterna Savings) but instead provides loan guarantees. In practice, social enterprises are rarely funded by ACCF since most loans are under \$5000 and therefore below the financial needs of a start-up social enterprise. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 38)

- The Ottawa Community Loan Fund (OCLF), similar to the Saint John Community Loan Fund, responds to the needs of the local community through micro-financing. Like ACCF, loans are actually provided by Alterna Savings with guarantees provided by OCLF. Most funding goes towards established small and medium sized enterprises in the private sector. The Fund guarantees loans from \$1,000-\$15,000 with an interest rate 6% above prime. While one of the three loan categories is for social enterprises and co-operatives, OCLF has only extended one loan to a social enterprise. However, they are in the process of developing a Social Enterprise Fund to better meet the needs of this growing area of activity. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 39)
- PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise runs a Peer Lending Circles program that serves the micro-financing needs of women. The peer circles (usually between 4-7 women) do not provide loans themselves but rather provide references for members and assume collective responsibility for loans that are provided by the Community Futures Development Corporation, through approval by PARO's board of directors. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 40)

## ***Manitoba***

- Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, and Loxley (2009, p. 9) identified some of the loan programs available to social economy organizations in Manitoba.
- The Communities Economic Development Fund is a loan agency for northern businesses. Most loans go to small entrepreneurs but some also go to community development corporations and community owned enterprises.
- The Rural Economic Development Initiative is targeted towards rural and northern business development through technical assistance and loan guarantees.
- The Department of Agriculture manages the Community Works Loan program, which provides loans to rural community development corporations for job creation by local businesses.

## **National**

The Canadian Alternative Investment Cooperative (CAIC) issues secured loans in three different areas: *Social Enterprise Funding*, *Mortgages for Community-based Projects* and *Social and Affordable Housing Initiatives*. CAIC's loans are generally issued at below market interest rates and are open for payment/repayment without any penalty. Loan applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis with a maximum of three applicants considered at each monthly meeting. (Elson, Gouldsborough, & Jones, 2009, p. 45)

## **Grants**

Government continues to be the largest provider of grant money for social economy activities in Canada, with provincial governments supplying more than any other level of government (Karaphillis, Asimakos, & Moore, 2010, p. 11). The number and type of funding opportunities through government sources are typically shaped by the governments of the day and the political context of the province, region, and municipality.<sup>14</sup> Across Canada we see a variety of governmental approaches to financially supporting the social economy, including the approaches explored above. Most funding comes in the form of development capital through granting programs.

These programs generally have specific foci and criteria to meet government priorities. While there is no interest to be paid on these granting contributions, and no repayment is required, because of the funding requirements there may be “strings attached to some grants [that] can make them a very expensive form of finance. For example, grants that fund new or expanded program offerings may create extra costs, such as in staffing. The organization may have to divert resources from other areas which may upset the balance and create extra risk” (Wuttunee, Chicilo, Rothney, & Gray, 2008, p. 3).

There are too many grants covered across the CSERP projects to be able to go into any great depth here, however, below you will find a list of some of the grant programs explored through the research suite.

## **Québec**

- La Financière du Québec, a subsidiary of Investissement Québec, is a

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<sup>14</sup> See the chapter on “Enabling and Enforcing the Social Economy through Public Policy” to learn more about political contexts in Canada.

crown corporation that administers a variety of business funding programs, including grants to small and medium businesses. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 1)

- The Fonds de solidarité, managed by the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec and funded by the Government of Canada, provides development finance for job creation and economic development. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 6)
- The Fonds de lutte contre la pauvreté par la réinsertion au travail [Fund to Combat Poverty through Labour Market Reintegration], supports “job readiness, job creation and labour market reintegration projects carried out by organizations in order to help economically-disadvantaged people join the workforce through job reintegration and job creation projects, especially employment insurance claimants, immigrants, and, most importantly, visible minorities and women.”(Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, pp. 1-2)
- The Fonds de développement des entreprises d’économie sociale [Social Economy Businesses Development Funds], are funds that have been integrated into local development centres. Grants are used to cover start-up costs of new enterprises, but can also serve for the consolidation of social economy organizations. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 2)
- The Fonds jeunes promoteurs [Young Promoters’s Fund] can usually provide \$3,000 grants to individuals. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 3)
- Financial Assistance for Domestic Help Services Program (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 3)
- The Programme d’aide aux entreprises d’économie sociale œuvrant dans le secteur de la gestion des matières résiduelles [Financial Assistance Program for Social Economy Businesses in the Waste Management Sector] is committed to creating and maintaining long-lasting and quality jobs in social economy organizations that manage projects related to waste management. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 4)
- The Programme d’aide financière aux entreprises d’économie sociale œuvrant dans le cadre des Plans de gestion des matières résiduelles [Financial Assistance Program for Social Economy Businesses Working in the Area of Waste Management Plans] (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 4)
- The Programme de soutien aux regroupements sectoriels en

économie sociale [Financial Assistance Program for Social Economy Sector-Based Networks] is dedicated to improving expertise within the social economy, the entrepreneurial capacity of management, as well as the sustainability of social economy organizations. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 4)

- The Programme de subvention aux entreprises adaptées [Adapted Businesses Grants Program] provides salary grants, consolidation grants and start-up grants. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 4)
- FondAction is the Cooperation and Employment Development Fund managed by the Confédération des syndicats nationaux and funded by Québec. It invests “at least 60% of its assets (from the preceding year) in Québec businesses, mainly those involved in participative management, self-controlled businesses, cooperatives or other organizations that have included in their charter an equal distribution of the right to vote between shareholders or members, or that are organizations whose decisions or activities contribute to protect or improve the environment.” (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, pp. 6-7)
- *FilAction* – a subsidiary fund of FondAction, provides local investments and the provision of community funds to fulfill the funding needs of businesses requiring less than \$500,000 and to provide funds to communities. *FilAction* also manages the Fonds de financement coopératif [Cooperative Funding Fund]. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 7)
- The Réseau québécois du crédit communautaire [Québec Network of Community Credit]. (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 7)

### **Ontario**

- The Toronto Enterprise Fund holds annual Business Plan Competitions to grant seed funding to non-profits or community groups starting up social enterprises in Toronto, ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 per year. The competition is geared towards only those social enterprises that provide permanent or transitional employment to people who are low-income, homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 44)
- Enterprising Non-profits Toronto is a capital pool that issues matching grants of up to \$10,000 to non-profit organizations in need of professional technical assistance and advice. The program is focussed on social enterprise planning only. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 43)

- The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the provincial government and one of the largest grant foundations in Canada. Their funding comes from annual transfer payments from the provincial government. It has issued hundreds of millions of dollars to thousands of non-profit and charitable organizations since its inception. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 48)
- Social Venture Partners Toronto is a unique collective of professionals who pool their financial resources to maximize the impact of their charitable giving. Their mission “is to create significant, long-term change by improving the capacity of selected not for profit agencies, and to increase philanthropy and engaged giving in Toronto.” (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 46).
- Eastern Ontario Development Fund provides matching grants for small-medium sized enterprises, social enterprises, economic development offices, business associations and non-governmental organizations. (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 49).

### **Manitoba**

- Neighbourhoods Alive! provides core funding to community development corporations, neighbourhood renewal, culture, youth recreation, safety, and training. (Kain, Sharkey, & Webb, 2010, p. 40)
- The Winnipeg Partnership Agreement, is a tripartite partnership between Federal, Provincial, Municipal governments. Two key areas of the agreement are around Aboriginal Participation and the Social Economy and Community Development. (Kain, Sharkey, & Webb, 2010, pp. 14-15)

### **Internally Generated Revenue**

The dependency of social economy organizations on government funding has increasingly been identified as an unsustainable practice. In the current political paradigm of funding cuts to social services many organizations have been exploring ways in which they may become more enterprising so that they may generate their own finances to cover some or all of their operating budget. Wuttunee, Chicilo, Rothney, and Gray (2008) begin their paper, *Financing Social Enterprise: An Enterprise Perspective*, by stating “though they are not really a ‘financial instrument,’ internal capital sources are perhaps the most important source of all. They play an important role throughout the life of the enterprise. Internal capital usually refers to operating

surpluses from the organization's cash flow, but it may also include 'sweat equity' or the free labour and other resources that replace cash" (p. 2). They go on to elucidate that, "revenue from customers is the source of sustainability, not investment (grants, loans, equity, etc.)" (p. 3).

In his "Test of Moderated Mediation between Board Size and Financial Performance in the Nonprofit Sector," Kistruck (2006) looked at the impact of board size on the financial performance of a non-profit agency. He used a sample of 167 organizations within two statistical methods of measuring correlations, ordinary least squares and a moderated mediation model. He found in his study that donated funds are actually less costly for agencies than self-generated revenue, "despite the greater reporting and infrastructure costs that are assumed" (p. 14). He cautions organizations considering pursuing enterprising methods of revenue generation as they may negatively affect financial performance.

Many projects within the Canadian Social Economy Research Projects focussed on the development, operation, and scaling up of social enterprises within Canada's social economy.<sup>15</sup> While it is clear that there are some substantial challenges facing entrepreneurship within non-profit organizations, the external financial challenges for the social economy seem to only be on the rise. Further research is required to see whether long-term sustainability of organizations through the operation of enterprise(s) is attainable and to determine the critical components to successful social enterprise.

## Funding Databases

The availability and sources of funding are always changing for the social economy and the non-profit sector at large. Because of these changes and the real challenges for social economy organizations in researching the financial opportunities available to them an indispensable tool has been the development of funding databases, to act as a one-stop information resource to organizations seeking financial support.

Two projects within CSERP, in particular, focussed on the development of databases.

A British Columbia/Alberta initiative created an online database of social enterprise capital providers across the two provinces, hosted by Enterprising Non-

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<sup>15</sup> To learn more about these projects please refer back to the chapter "Social Enterprises and the Social Economy."



profits. (Enterprising Non-Profits, 2010) A Saskatchewan based initiative focussed on developing an Aboriginal funding database that would meet community “demand for a more responsive and transparent process for the funding of programs geared towards Aboriginal people” (Lynch, Spence, & Findlay, 2007, p. 2).

## Summary and Looking Forward

The financing of the social economy has been and will continue to be an interesting area of activity within the sector. The unfortunate experience of many social economy organizations is that as financial difficulties mount (most commonly in the form of governmental funding cuts) the demand for their social services also increases. The presence of the social economy in Canada will no doubt continue but the size of the sector will most likely ebb and flow along with the broader mainstream economy. Revelations about the resiliency of credit unions in the face of the recent economic downturn are heartening for the sector but the financial security of the social economy as a whole continues to be precarious. While innovations are being made in the field of social finance the sector would benefit from the replication of some of these models, further financing of existing social economy funds, and the adoption of new methods of supporting the sector by existing governmental and philanthropic funders. In particular, the advancements made in Quebec and other areas in developing sector owned and managed financial resources (e.g., trusts, patient capital funds, etc.) are helping the sector to become more sustainable and autonomous.

Many questions remain for researchers and practitioners working in the area of financing the social economy. As government’s look to further reduce their spending on social services and the non-profit sector, who will become the major financial supporters of social economy organizations? How can governments support the social economy without contributing to provincial/national debt? How can social economy organizations become increasingly financially self-sufficient? And what, if any, are the costs (financial, social, and environmental) associated with these ongoing changes to the financial environment for the social economy in Canada?



## CHAPTER 7

# Enabling and Enforcing the Social Economy through Public Policy

Matthew Thompson

### Introduction

For many people, public policy is a nebulous term, used within a political context in which they feel they have no voice and very little power. And yet there is no doubt that public policy has a profound impact on the lives of all citizens and the activities that take place within our communities. So it is important for those working within and promoting the social economy to understand what is meant by public policy, how it affects them, and how they can bring about policy change.

For the purposes of this ebook we will be focusing on government policy as opposed to organizational policy, such as those found in social economy organizations or academic institutions. Public policy can be understood as the values that guide governmental decision-making and action. As has been outlined by Sherri Torjman, “there are two main categories of policy. Substantive policy constitutes legislation and policy leading to programs such as income security, childcare services, and employment initiatives, while administrative policy constitutes the gathering and evaluation of information in society” (Reimer et. al., 2009, p. 3).

Nancy Neamtan of the Chantier de l'économie sociale in Québec has further clarified public policy as it pertains to the social economy in the following four categories:

*Territorial policy* plays an important role in social entrepreneurship by providing a geographic community with funds and support for networking, strategic planning, and collective projects. Other *generic tools* for development directed at small and medium-sized businesses can also support CED enterprises with a minimum of alterations, since community-based organizations need similar access to investment tools, adequate markets, research and

development, and efficient management expertise. Tools specifically designed for CED organizations that recognize and support their social, environmental, and cultural objectives help to create a level playing field on which they can compete fairly with conventional, for-profit, small- and medium-sized businesses ... *Sectoral policies* that strategically support the emergence of specific economic sectors can greatly benefit social enterprises, which are more able to meet needs in society and economic sectors that are not otherwise adequately met in a market society. *Policies in favour of target populations* offer specific support for the social enterprises that offer valuable employment and services to marginalized groups. They often aim to integrate people deemed unproductive, who may be reliant on government income assistance programs, into the workforce. (Reimer et. al., 2009, p. 4)

There also exists particular tension within government between the notion of acting as an enabler or an enforcer, as is illustrated in the graph below.

State as Enabler						State as Enforcer					
Hard		Soft				Soft		Hard			
Partners	Accord	Seeks out opportunity to support	Promotes common goals	Provides Information	Exhorts Action Praise	Exhorts Action Threats	Eligibility rules	Tied Aid	Regulations	Legislation	Legislation penalties
Cooperative Equal	Collaborative	Benelolent	Kind	Passive	Parental	Parental	Guardian	Directive	Imposing	Mandate	Coercive Unequal

(With permission, Brock & Bulpitt, 2007, p. 8)

Overview

Well over 80 projects within the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP) included some form of analysis of public policy within their research parameters. Through this research a diverse array of policy barriers, supports, and development opportunities were identified.

In this chapter we will summarize some of the major findings of these projects, exploring the political climate across Canada as it pertains to the social economy, the types of policy tools that are used to both enable and govern social economy activities, and how these polices are implemented. The overall picture provided here will not be a complete analysis of Canada’s public policy landscape and it’s impact on the social economy. Rather it provides an overview of the CSERP research findings in these areas and may be used as a reference point for both reviewing the research and identifying where further research may be required.

For a more comprehensive study of public policy as it pertains to the social economy please refer to another ebook in this series from the Canadian Social Economy Hub entitled, *Canadian Public Policy and the Social Economy*.

## General Overview of the Political Climate in Canada

Within the present political climate of Canada there is perceived opportunity within the Social Economy to help steer public policy towards building a greater presence for the sector within Canadian society. This perception is corroborated by recent trends in government fiscal planning where the federal government has been downloading services to the provincial governments, the provinces to municipal governments, and municipalities to private and community organizations, all in an attempt to balance budgets. (McGrath & Myers, 2009, p. 8)

However, an unsettling parallel trend is a reduction of transfer payments from federal to provincial governments and provincial to municipal governments (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 14) which impedes the abilities of each lower level of government to deliver services or fund community delivery of these services. Nonetheless, there appears to be a growing willingness on the part of all levels of government to support the growth of the social economy to be able to address the social wellbeing of individuals and communities across Canada, and pick up the shortfall of governmentally delivered social services.

This was reflected in the federal Throne speech in 2004, which announced for the first time a priority on advancing Canada's social economy and which led to the funding of CSERP. (Myers & McGrath, 2009, p. 16)

All provinces have been affected in some way by the policies and styles of governance of the federal government; however, each province has found different ways of adapting according to the economic opportunities and challenges of the time, the provincial governments of the day, and the history of the development of each province. Though not a complete portrait of the political contexts of all areas of Canada, this section will attempt to explore some of the similarities and differences between each province as presented in the research of CSERP.

### Atlantic Canada

Separate social economy policy scans were made in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, and Prince Edwards Island through the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network of Atlantic Canada. These

scans reveal a commonality between these Maritime provinces in the development of their social economy sectors but also highlight how they have grown differently given their distinctive political and economic climates.

Atlantic provinces have also witnessed a dramatic change in their political environment with the emergence of neoliberal policies in the 1990s. Funding programs have moved further away from core and long-term funding to short-term, project-related funding. But along with this political shift has come an interest in working in partnership, or at the least engaging, with a variety of community-based organizations and local citizens, as represented in statements of commitment for politicians, the development of action plans, and the organizing of roundtables and task forces. (Myers & McGrath, 2009, p. 7)

In terms of these more positive developments, Newfoundland & Labrador and New Brunswick are regarded as positive examples within Atlantic Canada in advancing policies supportive of the development of the social economy. Both provinces now have a minister appointed to what can be considered the social economy sector (the Rural Secretariat for the former and the Community Non-profit Organizations Secretariat for the latter). “Interestingly, there are well-established development agencies in these two provinces, which have been central to developing and sustaining policy input and dialogue and which could be seen as contributing to the development of these two government posts” (McGrath & Myers, 2009, p. 9).

### ***Newfoundland & Labrador***

The creation of a Rural Secretariat in Newfoundland & Labrador was declared during the provincial Throne speech of 2005, following the federal Throne Speech that ushered in the social economy initiative. The Throne Speech made commitments “to foster partnerships and decision-making between government and communities and to ensure regional perspectives would inform public policy development and implementation. Beyond communities (i.e., municipalities), the speech detailed inclusion of women’s and aboriginal voices in policy formulation, and a support for community service and voluntary commitment” (Myers & McGrath, 2009, p. 16). While the influence of the Secretariat waned for a while it was renewed by the appointment of a new minister in 2008 and the continued active participation of the Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC).

Prior to the Rural Secretariat, however, Newfoundland & Labrador had already created an immensely important piece of policy in the Strategic Social Plan. With the integral contribution of CSC, the provincial government developed this Plan in 1998 to create inclusive environments for policy dialogue, eventually leading to the development of the Rural Secretariat. (Myers & McGrath, 2009, pp. 17-18)

### ***New Brunswick***

In New Brunswick, policy successes in the social economy have been more recently won, after several years of grassroots mobilization and government dialogue. The election of Shawn Graham's Liberal Party in 2006 established recognition of the non-profit sector as "a 'third pillar' in building a vibrant and sustainable New Brunswick" (Myers, April 2010, p. 3). A Premier's Non-profit Community Task Force was formed and developed the Blueprint for Action (also known as the *Bradshaw Report*) in 2007. The aforementioned Community Non-profit Organizations Secretariat grew out of this report.

Though all of this activity is still in its early stages, "there is a need to examine consistencies between espoused actions through policy statements and documents and actual developments and practice" (Myers, April 2010, p. 13). This need is underlined by realizations at recent government/community meetings that those in attendance were not familiar with contents the Blueprint for Action report.

### ***Nova Scotia***

While Myers (June 2010) notes that in 2003 "Nova Scotia had the highest concentration of voluntary and community organisations of the four Atlantic Provinces" (p. 3) the province has not seen the same rate of development in the policy arena as Newfoundland & Labrador and New Brunswick have. In fact, "[t]here is no specific department with a mandate for 'social economy' or 'third sector'" (Myers, June 2010, p. 6).

But Nova Scotia does have a history of political support for volunteering and engaging the public in policy, particularly around health. This has helped lead towards the recent development of 'local voluntary sector development agency' which is stirring up interest in the social economy with the Government of Nova Scotia. (McGrath & Myers, 2009, p. 9)

### ***Prince Edward Island***

Prince Edward Island (PEI) has a co-operative history stretching back to 1863, a testament to the province's propensity for building strong social networks (partly facilitated by its population and geographic size). The Government of PEI has also shown a readiness in engaging social economy organizations in partnerships, collaborations, and advisory committees, although in terms of policy development community involvement has not extended beyond consultation.

Despite all of this, however, PEI ranked the lowest in the Maritimes in terms of "support for human and social capital as well as focused development support" (Myers, July 2010, p. 13). A major reason for this is the absence of social economy related mandates within the provincial government, outside of the incorporation processes for charities and co-operatives. (Myers, July 2010, p. 7) Even with a long co-operative history, PEI does not have a secretariat or some other body dedicated to co-operative development.

There is reason for hope, however, with "the development of rural initiatives as well as infrastructure support in the sector (for co-operatives if not non-profit voluntary and community organizations)" (Myers, July 2010, p. 14).

### **Québec**

Québec is understood as being the leader amongst provinces in the development of its social economy. This is largely explained through the historical and cultural context of Québec. A strong co-operative sector emerged in the 19th Century, but it was largely the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s that resulted in a rejuvenated provincial/national pride that included "radical unionism, the separatist movement, enactment of laws to protect the French language, and in some cases unprecedented collaboration among state, labour, private sector (including co-operatives) and non-government community organizations" (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 7).

Government played a large role during this period in the redistribution of wealth and the creation and delivery of social programs. The recession in Canada of the 1980s, however, highlighted the limitations of a "state led development strategy" (Mendell & Neamtan, 2008, p. 2) as the Government of Québec struggled to balance its budget while maintaining jobs and social programming. Fortunately, the galvanization of labour movements, community networks and organizations,



and anti-poverty groups, all fostered in the years following the Quiet Revolution, helped germinate the seeds of the social economy

After 30 years of tripartite cooperation Québec's social economy sprouted with the Summit on the Economy and Employment in 1996. This led to the following three key initiatives:

Three kinds of initiatives enabled the strengthening of the social economy's development: 1) funding of the social economy through certain public institutions (Investissement Québec [Québec Investment]) and new funds (the Fonds de lutte contre la pauvreté par la réinsertion au travail, the Fonds d'économie sociale, and the Réseau d'investissement social du Québec [the Fund to Combat Poverty through Labour Market Reintegration, the Social Economy Fund, and the Québec Social Investment Network, respectively]; 2) legislative changes, for example, the creation of solidarity cooperatives; 3) training and research (CSMO/ÉSAC, CRISES, ARUC-ÉS). (Mendell & Rouzier, 2006, p. 1)

Also emerging from this Summit was the Chantier de l'économie sociale, "a multi-scalar and multi-sectoral institutional space that is unique in its diversity and in its unity. This does not imply consensus on all issues. Rather, the *Chantier's* commitment to constructing an alternative model of economic development embedded in a process of *deliberative democratic decision making* is the basis for this innovative network of networks" (Mendell & Neamtan, p. 1).

## Ontario

Ontario, much like other provinces in Canada, has a policy environment that is largely dominated by neo-liberal politics, which began for Ontario in 1995 with the election of Mike Harris' Progressive Conservative party. This era ushered in cuts to taxes and many programs and benefits were clawed back. Many of these program cuts resulted in lost funding for organizations in Ontario's social economy, leaving many organizations in an increasingly shaky financial situation. While the current government in Ontario may not be explicitly following a neo-liberal agenda, it has done little to reverse the cuts made by the previous government and "has continued to view the voluntary sector in silos, developing relationships which are specific to the interests of a particular ministry, and little thought to the collective contribution of the non-profit sector as a whole, distinct from volunteering, to the citizens of Ontario" (Elson, Gouldsborough, & Jones, 2009, p. 11).

Following the end of the federal Voluntary Sector Initiative instead of adopting a similar initiative provincially the Ontario government adopted to select only a few of its programs and eventually created a Partnership Project with the non-profit sector through the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. There continues to be “no central policy arena in the provincial government for either non-profits or social enterprises. Dedicated and targeted programs exist within many ministries, but this does not constitute an open source of capital.” (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 15)

In contrast with Québec, Ontario has not had a strong history of labour and anti-poverty movements and the greater social economy, outside of the co-operative sector, has not been able to organize and mobilize effectively to push for greater policy representation. However, “[t]his may be changing with the emergence of the Ontario Nonprofit Network and the Social Economy Roundtable, both funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation” (Elson, Gouldsbrough, & Jones, 2009, p. 12).

### **Manitoba**

The Government of Manitoba has been instrumental in making the province a leader in Canada in terms of developing enabling social economy policies. The New Democratic Party, elected in 1999, developed a Community and Economic Development Committee of Cabinet to help spur grassroots community work. “This was the first time in the history of the province that community was explicitly mentioned in the name of the Cabinet committee responsible for determining government policy on economic development” (Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, & Loxley, 2009, p. 7).

As will be explored in the following section on policy tools, the Government of Manitoba has advanced some very unique ideas on how to support the social economy in the province.

### **Northern Territories**

The context for the Northern Territories is substantially different to warrant a separate examination. The State’s role in the development of the social economy in the Northern Territories must be understood within the unique context in which the State emerged and took form in the North. Public institutions were not set up in the North until close to the 20th century and what has emerged since the British North America Act are “nearly-province-like territorial governments, regionally adapted provincial institutions, various innovative forms of Indigenous self-

government, a range of constitutionally protected resource co-management boards, and a set of distinctive, entrenched political practices through which northern residents make collective decisions” (Abele, 2009, p. 38). The federal government also continues to play a prominent, and in some cases dominant, role in the North.

State interest in the Northern Territories did not begin in earnest until the depression of the 1930s, and focused on the wealth of natural resources. This changed, however, with the security threats inherent in the unprotected borders of the North during World War II. Federal policy development for the North has largely remained top-down and focused on mineral extraction and a continued military presence. “The developmental edge of the state in the postwar period was not a democratic one. Measures were planned in the South and then implemented in the North, often by people who may have had good intentions but an imperfect grasp of the local impacts of their actions” (Abele, 2009, p. 44). Economic interests have largely fueled the development of infrastructure, concentrated in the larger centres, although these centres have also become important for service delivery as well.

The Canadian government has recently acknowledged that the enduring gap in socio-economic conditions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is intolerable and that generic, one-size-fits-all policies and programs are clearly inadequate to effectively address the multifaceted disadvantages facing the diverse groups of Aboriginal people in Canada (Patterson, 2006; Government of Canada, 2004, 2008; INAC, 2007, 2007a). This recognition has helped various governmental and non-governmental agencies to reach consensus regarding the need to design separate policies and programs tailored to the diverse needs and aspirations of different Aboriginal groups. (Delic, 2009, p. 140)

## **Existing Government Tools for Supporting the Social Economy**

A wide variety of policy tools can be employed to further the development of the social economy in Canada. Currently, the experience has been that the development and application of policies has been inconsistent across provinces and certain tools have been more readily implemented while other tools remain rare within Canada’s policy landscape. This section will explore some of the policy tools identified within the CSERP research projects, identifying where there appears to be gaps in terms of typology and regional application.

## Overarching Policy Frameworks

Perhaps the strongest piece of policy that can be created by any government is an overarching framework that then shapes the way that they form subsequent policy. While we haven't seen such a social economy agenda adopted at the federal level in Canada there are some heartening examples within Canada.

Manitoba has adopted both a Community Economy Development (CED) Policy Framework and a CED Lens. The framework was designed using locally developed principles of CED (known as the Neechi principles) to outline 5 goals: "building greater community capacity; nurturing pride, self-reliance, and leadership; enhancing knowledge and skills; developing businesses that are responsive to social, economic, and environmental needs; and fostering balanced, equitable, and sustainable economic development" (Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, & Loxley, 2009, pp. 7-8). With the help of a CED Working Group that works between different governmental departments, the Government of Manitoba uses the framework's goals to strengthen communities through local employment, environmental sustainability, support of grassroots mobilization, ownership and decision-making, and collaboration across many levels of government and community. Likewise, the CED Lens helps guide the implementation of the framework through a series of questions against which civil servants may check their policy development and program delivery.

This framework is certainly novel and innovative within the Canadian context however, Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, and Loxley (2009) note that the implementation of the framework has not been consistent throughout the provincial government and have identified a need to launch an "internal campaign to educate all levels of the civil service on the principles and practices laid out in the CED Lens and broader framework" (p. 21).

The social economy framework in Québec was not explicitly covered within the CSERP projects, like that of Manitoba, but its history of public policy co-construction (i.e., the participation of civil society and market stakeholders in the creation of policy) and co-production (i.e., the realization of public policy by the various stakeholders) (Vaillancourt, 2008, p. 12) was covered in detail. These practices stem from almost 40 years of ongoing dialogue between government and civil society, particularly in the co-production of public policy, during and after the Quiet Revolution. Now, for the past decade, the Government of Québec has been committed to involving meaningfully actors within the social economy in the generation and execution of public policy that will have an impact on the sector.

## Funding Programs

Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, and Loxley (2009) assert that “the provincial government’s main instrument in terms of capacity building is the provision of funding” (p. 8) and certainly this seems to be the case for all governments across Canada. Governments predominately fund the social economy through granting programs although there is growing interest in supporting and/or developing different approaches to finance such as loan programs and tax credits. The funding methods used by government to assist the growth and continued strength of the social economy tend to be divided into either ‘development capital’ (i.e., direct funding to existing organizations) or ‘solidarity financing’ (i.e., being a contributor to non-governmentally managed funding) (Elson, Gouldsborough, & Jones, 2009, p. 20).<sup>16</sup> Programs do also exist to help fund start up social enterprises, but often these funds are available to and seem more likely to be directed towards small- and medium-sized businesses.

All funding programs have a variety of stated priorities and requirements that exclude some organizations and grassroots initiatives from receiving financial support. Research is missing in terms of what areas within the social economy are underfunded. In Atlantic Canada, however, we now know that a national overview is required to understand the broader context and to take account of situations where a locally based organization may be working at a national policy level because of the anomalies of the division of powers among levels of government. (McGrath & Myers, 2009, pp. 8-9).

While many social economy organizations depend upon government financial support to cover their core costs and to run programs, many regions in Canada experience an environment where access to capital “is highly fragmented, with little co-ordination and no central portal to access these funds” (Elson, Gouldsborough, & Jones, 2009, p. 15). This remains a body of work to be completed that would serve as a useful tool for many organizations across the country.

## Tax Credits

Tax credits can provide a strong incentive to investors to support the development of the social economy. A recent proposal to the Alberta provincial government (*A Community Economic Development Investment Fund for Alberta*) outlined

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<sup>16</sup> For further exploration of existing funding programs in Canada please refer to the chapter *Financing the Social Economy*.

the following benefits of tax credit programs:

- increased employment and therefore increased personal tax revenues;
- increased business revenue and therefore increased tax revenues;
- simplicity of contributions (vs. investments which require securities commission approvals);
- avoids the creation of a government oversight body; and
- investments in local housing and small-business initiatives.

(Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 51)

### ***British Columbia***

In British Columbia the Venture Capital Programs provides equity investors with a 30% refundable tax credit (up to \$7.5 million in tax credits provincially per year) when they invest in 'Eligible business Corporations' (must be promoting 'community diversification') for a minimum commitment of 5 years. Under this program tax credits also exist for clean technology development (Cleantech Venture Capital program) and community economic development. Currently these programs are designed for the for-profit sector, but are limited to social enterprises. (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 32)

### ***Alberta***

No tax credits currently exist in Alberta to promote investments in the social economy; however, a proposal was submitted to the provincial government in 2003 for a community economic development tax credit. Actors within the sector are hopeful that the proposal was submitted to the provincial government of Alberta. (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 51)

### ***Nova Scotia***

Established in 1993, the Nova Scotia Equity Tax Credit is aimed toward investment in small businesses, and co-operatives. More recently, Community Economic Development Investment Funds (CEDIF) are also helping to finance community economic development by providing a 30% tax credit (up to \$15,000 in tax credits provincially per year) to investors committed to holding shares for a minimum of 5 years. CEDIF investments are also eligible for RRSP investments. (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 50)

## **Manitoba**

The Manitoba Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit Program borrows from the Nova Scotia model, providing a 30% tax credit to investors of approved social enterprises or CEDIFs. Investors must commit to holding shares for a minimum of only 3 years and are limited a return of \$9,000 per year. No investments have been made yet into CEDIFs, however there have been 565 equity investors in nine community enterprises. Research to date has shown a lack of knowledge within government about the program and its successes, which is seen to hold back the effectiveness of the program by social economy actors. (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, pp. 50-51)

## **Québec**

Québec has been providing tax credits for social economy activity for longer than any other province. Since the early 1980s shareholders in the province's labour-sponsored investment funds can count on receiving a 30% income tax credit on their investment (15% from the province, 15% from the federal government). These investment funds in turn help finance "local businesses, anchoring capital, saving jobs and promoting a wider process of community regeneration" (Heaslip, 2007, p. 7). Québec also provides tax credits to members of worker co-operatives, production co-operatives and worker-investor co-operatives through the Régime d'investissement coopératif, a novel approach to support co-operative development in the Québec. (Heaslip, 2007, p. 21)

## **Yukon Territory**

The Government of Yukon has developed a Yukon Small Business Investment Tax Credit (YSBITC) that investors can claim on their personal income tax. Though the credit has helped to stimulate the local economy, social economy organizations have not appeared to benefit from this policy. The credit does not apply to start up enterprises, which may be preventive criteria for social economy organizations. The additional barrier, however, is the "general lack of understanding and awareness of the value of co-operative enterprises. [within the Yukon government] ... When seeking government funding, the Great Green Growers Co-operative found themselves having to educate government departments as to why the co-op model was best suited to meeting their needs" (Hardy, 2009, p. 35).

### ***The United States***

In the U.S. the New Markets Tax Credit Program (provided under the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund) has attracted \$16 billion of private investment to community development since 2000. Taxpayers who invest in designated Community Development Entities receive a credit against Federal income taxes. (Pearson & Lawrence, 2009, p. 47)

### ***The United Kingdom***

Since 2001, the Government of the United Kingdom has been providing a Community Investment Tax Credit to corporations and individuals that invest in Community Development Financial Institutions. (Heaslip, 2007, p. 17)

### **Procurement Policies**

A decision making process is used every time a purchase is made. In a free market economy these decisions generally revolve around pricing, determined by supply and demand. However, many other factors may be included in the process of making a purchasing decision. McMurtry and Reed (2010) explored some of the historical trends that have shifted the purchasing behaviour of the general public and publicly funded institutions like municipalities, school boards, and universities towards greater social responsibility. A number of other CSERP research papers have identified the purchasing power of governments as a largely untapped opportunity for supporting the social economy in Canada. Lepage (2009) states that “[w]hen a purchaser makes purposeful decisions that blend economic, social and environmental impacts they can directly and in a measurable and positive way they influence the health and sustainability of communities” (p. 3).

The New Economics Foundation refers to procurement as the ways in which the public sector obtains goods and services, also known as purchasing, public service delivery, and frontline services. There is an emerging opportunity in purchasing and procurement where a triple bottom line vision can be put into practice using existing expenditures. Practitioners and academics are starting to identify the need to blend the financial return on investment and the social impact of purchasing and procurement decisions – values that have traditionally been held as separate and non-intersecting. (Lepage, 2006; Tremblay, February 2010, p. 29)



### ***Municipalities in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia***

Kain, Sharkey, and Webb (2010) identified three different municipal purchasing decisions that exemplify local government commitment to procurement which builds stronger communities. In the small municipality of Craik, Saskatchewan, the municipal government purchased nearly 1,400 recycled car tires for roofing from nearby Saskatoon. Not only is the product warrantied for 50 years, making it a sound investment, but the purchase helped employ local workers while also demonstrating a commitment to the environment by recycling used material.

Similarly in the slightly larger municipality of Abbotsford in British Columbia, the local government has an ongoing contract with the Mennonite Central Committee's paper recycling service, whose mission is to employ people with mental disabilities.

In 2007 Calgary became one of the first cities in Canada to approve a ground breaking purchasing policy, the Sustainable Environment and Ethical Procurement Policy. (Kain, Sharkey, & Webb, 2010, p. 27)

### ***Ontario***

In Ontario, the Feed-in-Tariff Program, which was extended in 2009 with the *Green Energy Act*, acts as a procurement policy in that not only are companies, community groups, and individuals able to sell energy produced through green methods (e.g., wind, solar, etc.) to the provincial government, but higher rates are given to community based and first nations projects. This ensures a higher social return on the government's investment. (MacArthur, 2010, p. 14)

### ***Manitoba***

The Manitoba government is seen as one of the leaders in Canada in developing innovative procurement strategies. The Sustainable Development Act explicitly prioritizes the consideration of the environmental, economic and social impacts in all purchasing decisions. Adeler (2009) posits that this may well open the door to greater opportunity for co-operatives in winning government contracts.

To help ensure the implementation of the act through procurement practices the province developed the Sustainable Development Procurement Guidelines, setting out the following principles as mandatory considerations for all government purchases: "protecting human health and well-being; promoting environmentally

sustainable economic development; conserving resources; conserving energy; promoting pollution prevention; waste reduction and diversion; and evaluating value, performance, and need with a view of reducing consumption and using full cost accounting” (Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, & Loxley, 2009, p. 29). Unfortunately, as Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, and Loxley note, the general public does not have any means by which they may verify how these guidelines have impacted actual government procurement practices. Doubts about the impact of the legislation are given further credence when considering the fact that the Manitoba’s Government Purchases Amendment Act places clear limitations on when the sustainable development principles are applied to purchasing decisions. This includes applying the guidelines only for purchases amounting to a minimum of \$5,000, for contracts where there is *sufficient* competition, and for purchases that are not deemed to be an emergency, temporary in nature, or incidental (Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, & Loxley, 2009, p. 30).

Another important piece of procurement policy in Manitoba is the Aboriginal Procurement Initiative. This initiative directs all departments within Manitoba’s government to increase the number of government contracts with Aboriginal owned business. This is achieved through 4 mechanisms: by developing a contact list of Aboriginal business to be able to announce when new bidding opportunities arise, by ensuring that a certain percentage of a contract be fulfilled by or subcontracted to Aboriginal business, by setting aside certain contracts to initial bidding by only Aboriginal business – only to be opened to non-Aboriginal business if the bidding process is not adequately competitive, and by breaking down contracts into smaller components thereby making the bidding more accessible to Aboriginal business (Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, & Loxley, 2009, p. 10). This is a novel approach taken by a Canadian government that is gathering considerable interest for replication in other jurisdictions.

Finally, the Manitoba government was also a pivotal player in establishing the Social Purchasing Portal in Winnipeg. Originally developed by SEED Winnipeg and the North End Community Renewal Corporation, the Social Purchasing Portal, modeled after similar tools elsewhere in the country, acts as “a web-based information resource to promote and expand sales opportunities for social enterprises” (Department of Finance, Manitoba, 2006, F9), “which in turn creates employment opportunities for individuals or groups who face multiple barriers to employment” (Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, & Loxley, 2009, p. 10). This is a valuable tool for promoting and mediating exchanges between purchasers and double or triple bottom line businesses.

## ***National***

The research coming out of the CSERP projects suggests that Canada's procurement strategies are far behind other countries, particularly developed Anglophone countries like the United Kingdom and the United States. Some notable movement has been made to advance social purchasing mechanisms and strategies in Canada, however thus far the results have been limited. Tremblay (2010, February) identifies the Social Purchasing Portals in Winnipeg (as mentioned above), Vancouver, Toronto, Fraser Valley, Calgary, Waterloo Region, and Ottawa as important pieces to a growing national interest in values-based procurement (p.31). Further contributing to this is the recent Social Enterprise Purchasing Toolkit<sup>17</sup> (Lepage, 2009). Tremblay goes on to laud the concept of 'Citizens' Dividend' as a possible tool for measuring the social value resulting from the purchasing decisions of the federal government. This proposal, however, has not seen much momentum since it was first introduced in 2006 by Stephen Owen, the former federal Minister of Public Works and Government Services. Similarly, the more recent Task Force on Government-Wide Review of Procurement has the potential to further support for the social economy through government purchasing decisions but is still too nascent to see any noteworthy outcomes (Heaslip, 2007, p. 20).

One strategy for federal procurement that has perhaps the most opportunity for affecting government purchasing decisions is the Indian and Northern Affairs Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business. This strategy, similar to Manitoba's Aboriginal Procurement Initiative, seeks to increase the number of federal contracts with Aboriginal firms across all departments and agencies (Tremblay, February 2010, p. 32).

## ***The European Union***

The nations of the European Union have been developing a number of social procurement strategies that compliment a continental 'National Procurement Strategy' that emphasizes the use of procurement as a way to meet economic, social and environmental objectives, to encourage existing contractors to shift their values towards more social and environmental goals, and to develop diverse and competitive sources of supply to allow greater participation from small firms, ethnic minority businesses, social enterprises and voluntary and community organizations (Tremblay, February 2010, p. 29).

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.enterprisingnonprofits.ca/e-library-resources/social-enterprise-purchasing-toolkit>

### ***The United Kingdom***

In the United Kingdom, the government has passed laws to bring social and/or environmental criteria to the fore in governmental procurement decision making. Included along with these laws is a dedication to educating local authorities about how to include these criteria in their purchasing processes. The UK has also set out measurable goals for these procurement laws (Heaslip, 2007, p. 18).

### ***France***

Municipalities within France work with public institutions responsible for social inclusion to help promote social awareness among potential competing contractors (Tremblay, February 2010, p. 29).

### ***Germany***

Although Germany's policymakers have largely been opposed to social procurement strategies they do encourage the participation of social enterprises in competing for government contracts by splitting contracts into lots and allowing the participation of social enterprises as subcontractors (Tremblay, February 2010, pp. 29-30).

### ***Italy***

Specific legislation has been enacted in Italy to promote purchasing from organizations that employ disadvantaged people, non-profit organizations and other civil society organizations. Social co-operatives (co-operatives that have employed individuals with barriers to employment, comprising at least 30% of their staff) are entrusted with the management of janitorial and cleaning services, nursing services and waste management (Tremblay, February 2010, p. 30).

### ***The United States***

The United States have three major programs in place to support social procurement. The Small Business Administration "sets aside certain parts of federal contracts for small business, allows exclusive access to small contracts, and a guarantee of access to a percentage of larger government sub-contracts" (Heaslip, 2007, p. 19). Applicants must be at least 51 percent owned and controlled by one or more US citizens who are socially and economically disadvantaged (Tremblay, February 2010, p. 32). Small businesses owned by, and mostly employing,

ethnic minority groups, women, disabled persons, veterans, and the gay/lesbian community, are given fair opportunity to obtain federal contracts through the Minority Business Program. The HUBZones program, alternatively, helps development in disadvantaged communities through targeted federal contracts (Heaslip, 2007, p. 19).

A unique example of a state-led procurement initiative is the State of Connecticut's Minority & Small Contractors' Set Aside Program. This program helps to ensure that small and small minority owned businesses have an opportunity to bid on state contracts. Additionally, 25 percent of that amount is reserved for minority/women owned businesses (Tremblay, February 2010, p. 32).

### ***Australia***

Australia's department of Finance and Administration's Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines are geared toward greater participation of small and medium enterprise's (SME) in bidding for government contracts. SMEs are able to join in partnership with government (through what is called a social coalition) to enhance opportunities for social and economic participation, and ensure disadvantaged people have fair access to the community (Tremblay, February 2010, p. 32).

### ***Venezuela***

Venezuela has been taking a particularly alternative course of action to ensure that their economy is democratic and participatory. Using the principles of "endogenous development," the government has developed the Popular Economy Law, which includes procurement practices that favour co-operatives and small enterprises. Because of these practices co-operatives in the country have more than quadrupled between 1998 and 2004. Social indicators have also shown improvements, with poverty and income inequality declining sharply, health and access to education substantially improving, and higher education enrolment more than doubling (Tremblay, 2009, pp. 37-38).

## **Other Areas for Policy Impact on the Social Economy**

Some of the CSERP projects focussed on other ways in which governments in Canada could impact the development of the social economy. Some of the other policy initiatives include a focus on education, training, and capacity building, sectoral support programs, and infrastructure programs. Within the current

political context in Canada, however, these policy areas are not considered to provide the greatest potential impact for supporting the advancement of the social economy.

### Summary and Looking Forward

As governments at the provincial and federal levels look to decrease their involvement in social services there needs to be a dedication through policy to support the delivery of social services by community-based organizations. A number of authors (e.g., Reimer, Simpson, Hajer, & Loxley, 2009; Myers, 2010) have identified the importance of building cohesion within the social economy sector, through the development of networks and associations, to better facilitate communication between the sector and all levels of government, allowing for the co-construction and co-production of public policy. Further research is needed to better understand how to effectively organize the social economy within all regions in Canada, including what government supports are needed to do this and what are the various roles required from each organization within the sector. While government policy can evidently substantially help the growth of the social economy, actors and organizations within the sector cannot depend upon policy change to create a more enabling environment for their work given the often fickle nature of Canadian policy and governance.

## CHAPTER 8

### Conclusion

Joy Emmanuel

Through the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP), researchers – both academics and community players – worked together in completing close to 400 sector-focused research studies across the country – from sea to sea to sea. The volume of research is substantial in itself – but this further expands into hundreds of conference presentations on social economy research and activities, new tools for the sector, dozens of books, possibly hundreds of journal articles, new websites and databases, newspaper articles, curriculum resources for new post-secondary level courses, a new academic journal, at least two new academic-practitioner associations, and hundreds of new partnerships.

All together, the body of research summarized here provides an in-depth examination of the collective experience of millions of ordinary Canadians involved in day-to-day efforts to meet basic needs using democratic processes to build community capacity for a more sustainable, equitable future. The multiple players and organizations that make up the social economy in Canada, now have new tools and resources for understanding their collective experiences and building a stronger, more cohesive sector.

This research has contributed in many ways to advancing the interdisciplinary fields of Co-operative Studies, Social Economy Studies, and Community Economic Development. Having a volume of evidence-based literature for building curriculum resources to use in training future academics and professionals is a cornerstone to building such new disciplines. University students now have new opportunities to study the social economy as an emerging social movement and as a sector in its own right and learn how to apply their professional pursuits to more effectively address the challenges of the sector. Business students and future lawyers, accountants, and financial advisors can now have a better understanding of legal models, democratic processes and community-based practices of non-profits, social enterprises and co-operatives. In addition, a new generation of social economy researchers have been mentored into the field.

The work described here can have direct benefit in many ways at the community level. Whether one is a CED practitioner, a staff person of a non-profit agency, a member of a community group or a director of a social enterprise, this data provides new resources and tools that have direct application for day-to-day activities. Advocates of affordable housing will find research on the evaluation of housing initiatives and best practices for project development. Environmental groups, transition town supporters, or food security promoters will find studies on the self-determined indicators for the quality of life in rural communities, business studies on success factors for local farmers' markets; and insights for measuring the triple bottom line. Social entrepreneurs will find information on best practices in social enterprises to support vulnerable populations and trends in funders' evaluations of business plans. On the economic front there are studies on financial literacy, databanks of funders and lessons learned in growing a social enterprise business. For those who work on social policy levels, there is an abundance of evidence-based studies to draw on that lay out the size, scope, impact and needs of sector players, as well as statistics that provide a detailed picture of various dimensions of the social economy, which politicians may require to make needed reforms.

For funders and agents of financial institutions, for second-tier service organizations and government representatives working in the social economy sector, these reports present an array of materials to better understand the context and challenges of community players, the types of policies and reforms needed, the impact of funded programs, and empirical data to discern best practices for future community economic development endeavours.

Today, we have a new way of naming, and knowing, the social economy and the body of work described in this present volume has made a substantial contribution to that understanding. These multiple snapshots compose a Canadian mosaic documenting the growth, and presenting a portrait of innovative, collective ways of organizing to meet basic economic, social and environmental needs.

### **The Canadian Social Economy E-Book Series**

The inter-relationship between research and practice can be a dynamic synergy of systematic reflection for learning and increasing effectiveness. The research discussed in this volume arose from many partnerships between academics and community representatives across the country. While the current book summarizes the findings of many of the research studies, a companion book to this - *Community-*



*University Research Partnerships* – describes the workings of the partnerships themselves. The “partnership” book highlights the process of implementing and learning through community-university partnerships, this book summarizes the results of those partnerships. The first book becomes the theoretical how-to guide; this book supplies the methodological examples and evidence-based results.

A third book in the CSERP series – *Canadian Public Policy and the Social Economy* – highlights insights into Canadian policies that support and hinder the further growth of the sector and identifies strategic and practical elements for developing future policies.

Building partnerships is key to strengthening the sector by not staying separated in our silos (including the academic-community divide; different focuses within the sector; regional divisions, etc.). Establishing a body of evidence-based knowledge is vital to extending our understanding of the context and inner workings of the sector and effectively refining our practice based on what works and what is not working well. Developing good public policy is central to creating the conditions to support the healthy growth of the sector and for addressing the critical social issues of our times.

Through this collective work, participants and supporters of the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships, offer a view to into the core of the social economy sector – what we have learned about working together and what strategies might be helpful in future; what we can say about the state of the social economy, and what policies, programs and processes could support the future work of the sector.

## Looking Ahead

Through the closing declaration at the 2010 National Summit on a People Centered Economy, conference participants affirmed: “The participants of the Summit commit to co-operation among our organizations, institutions and networks in the task of scaling up the positive results we are producing and continuing to innovate new solutions to the challenges we face.”

This declaration is one document that illustrates developments within the sector toward a self-organizing, more self-aware social movement. Social Economy research, such as presented here, has played a part in the maturing of the sector. Part of the strategy agreed to at the Summit for reaching the goal of a sustainable

future includes building a stronger social movement “by building on the national Social Economy research program.”

In 2011, civil society has substantially increased resources for moving ahead with its agenda and post-secondary students have new opportunities to take courses in “Canadian Studies” or “Social Issues” framed through a Social Economy lens.

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